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ABSTRACT

This book is part of a series of case studies that demonstrate better ways to educate Ohio's students. The case study is part of the Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project, designed to support significant school-reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high schools. The text presents a case study based on an elementary school in southern Ohio. The introduction provides a historical overview of the school, which is followed by a description of the role that the community plays in the life of the school. The text focuses on the community connection, looking at the key elements, the vital place of the school in the community, the themes that run throughout the school community, the role of support teams, and the informal connections that abound in the school. The report provides a review of reform strategies, technology's role, the need for leadership in initiating change, the tension that accompanied the modified schedule, and how teachers, parents, and other stakeholders viewed change in the school. The last chapter examines the ethos of commitment, the dilemmas over the direction of change, the elements of successful change, and the movement toward community. Three appendices discuss methodology, the experience of change, and other information. (Contains 37 references.) (RJM)

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# Whatever It Takes

## The Case Study of Dawson-Bryant Elementary School

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## TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

# WHATEVER IT TAKES:

# THE CASE STUDY OF DAWSON-BRYANT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Ohio Department of Education
Columbus, Ohio
1999

Dear Readers:

The 12 Transforming Learning Communities case studies enlighten readers about the search for better ways to educate Ohio's young people. The stories, told by educators themselves, paint a realistic picture of schools in Ohio.

The unique and inspirational perspectives of the school people highlight the triumphs of team spirit, the drive to turn obstacles into opportunities, and the effort to consider complex questions and find answers that lead to higher student achievement. These researchers tell stories of success and frustration in the endeavor to make life better for future generations.

At the core of educational change is a long-term commitment to teaching and learning that has the potential for creating positive change throughout society. The case studies emphasize intense, high-quality professional development; increased service to others; a holistic approach to education; the promotion of a sense of community; and a deepened understanding of the daily work in the classrooms, corridors, and boardrooms of public schools.

The educators at the heart of change encourage us to examine and refresh our views about schools. Sincere thanks is extended to the local educators, university researchers, and concerned citizens for their willingness to examine the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of change.

Sincerely,

Linda C. Nusbaum

Linda C. Nusbaum
Research Project Manager

# Transforming Learning Communities Project

## FORWARD

The Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project was an initiative funded by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to support significant school reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high schools. Education researchers associated with the International Centre for Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto were contracted to undertake in-depth case studies of school improvement in a select number of schools supported by Ohio's Venture Capital grants. The aim was to understand the school improvement efforts in these schools, and to engage other Ohio educators in the lessons learned from these schools' experiences.

The project title communicates the orientation to the study. "Learning communities" is a metaphor for schools as learning places for everyone (especially students and teachers) who has a stake in the success of schools as educational environments. "Transforming" signifies that the schools are in a process of change, and that the changes they are striving to achieve involve fundamental reforms in teaching and learning, assessment, organization, professional development, and/or governance. Transforming also captures the intent of the project to support — not just to document — the process of change in participating schools.

The TLC Project began in the Spring of 1997. A three-stage process was used to identify and select schools that had demonstrated notable progress in their efforts to implement significant change over the preceding three to five years: (1) solicitation of nominations from ODE staff familiar with the Venture Capital schools, corroborating opinions from independent sources (e.g., Regional Professional Development Center staff), and statistical profiles for nominated schools (e.g., performance and demographic data); (2) telephone interviews with the principal of each nominated school; and (3) ranking of schools according to relevant sampling criteria. Twelve schools were chosen for variation in type (elementary, middle, secondary); location (rural, urban, and suburban from various regions in Ohio); focus for change (e.g., teaching and learning, professional growth, school-community partnerships); school improvement model; and evidence of progress.

The individual case studies were carried out during the 1997/98 school year by teams consisting of at least two members of the school staff and researchers from four Ohio universities that partnered with the schools. Each team designed and implemented a multi-method study of school improvement activities and outcomes in their school learning community. These included interviews, observations, surveys, and documents. While each case study reflected the unique character of school change at each school, the studies employed a common conceptual framework to guide their exploration and analysis of change in these school learning communities. The TLC framework oriented the case study teams to investigate change and change processes in multiple contexts — the classroom, the corridors, and the community — and in relation to three key processes of learning in organizations: collaboration, inquiry, and integration.

The major products of the Transforming Learning Communities Project include 12 individual case study monographs, a cross-case study and handbook, and a companion video at www.ode.ohio.gov.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This product represents the efforts and cooperation of many, many people. In particular the Dawson-Bryant Elementary Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) case study team wishes to thank, first, the children, teachers, staff, and parents of Dawson-Bryant Elementary for being so accommodating, flexible, and candid. The cooperation we received from the local businesses, social services, and local institutions of higher learning in the Coal Grove and Ironton made our job more pleasant and enriched the case study in multiple ways. Superintendent Donald Washburn, Sr., has supported our efforts from start to finish, showing himself to be a leader worthy of emulation. We also extend our thanks to the Dean's Office of the College of Education, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, for serving as the central coordinating agency for this case study. Our special thanks go to Dr. Stephen Anderson, Co-Director of the TLC project, for guidance, editorial comments and recommendations, and support. We also wish to thank Dr. L. Muir for editorial feedback.

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# PREFACE

This case study represents the observations and insights of many individuals. The voices of teachers, parents, and the case study team composed of Dawson-Bryant Elementary (DBE) and university staff can be heard throughout the discussion. The introduction provides a historical overview of the fine learning institution DBE has become with time and effort. The sections that follow explore the crucial role of the community that exists inside and outside the DBE building and the classroom and learning environment. Although separate, Chapters Two and Three overlap (e.g., there is a community component in the learning environment section and vice versa), and they embrace the elements common to the TLC case studies completed in Ohio during 1997-98. The broader background elements include the perspective of the prevalent culture of cooperation and collaboration across the school, the community, and the classroom. The role of the various technologies in DBE is explored, along with changes in the professional lives of teachers.

The final chapter examines the DBE experience as a growing, dynamic, and transforming learning community. This last section provides a macro view of the challenges overcome and the indicators of success at DBE. Finally, we will discuss emerging challenges and future directions for the continually transforming DBE learning community.

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Chapter One

# Introduction

In order to impart a sense of realism and personality to Dawson-Bryant Elementary School (DBE), this chapter begins with a personal narrative. A historical overview follows, exploring the roots of change at DBE (formerly known as Deering Elementary). Finally, we plot a timeline indicating the sometimes incremental and serendipitous journey of this transforming learning community.

## The Drive Into Town

As I first drove into the village of Coal Grove, I noted a chemical odor permeating the breeze. I recalled the smell: creosote, an industrial by-product of coal. This odor tells a lot about the area and the communities, which are composed of mostly blue-collar workers dependent upon waning heavy industry, described by one resident educator as a "rust bowl" economy. The community is a mix of the economically disadvantaged and a struggling middle class. Unemployment is high, and there is no building zoning.

As you drive into the community of Coal Grove, you are at the bottom of what the locals call a "hollow." Once through a modest and orderly business area north of State Route 52, you pass through a residential section peppered by small businesses of all kinds. Even at first glance one notices the striking mixture of private residences. Everything from tarpaper shacks to well-built modern homes line the road leading to Dawson-Bryant Elementary. Between these residences lie the ubiquitous mobile homes. Introspectively, my first impression on that rainy November morning was the apparent pride of this community. Even the most modest of residences often displayed evidence of scrupulous care and attention. Many of these community members represent the working poor.

As you dip into the third hollow, a road sign announces, "Deering," a small community outside of Coal Grove. Once past the Community Baptist Church, which abuts the community rifle range, you drive past Judy Giovanni's food establishment, where a plastic billboard exclaims, "Happy Birthday, Pearl." You turn left and enter the parking lot of Dawson-Bryant Elementary, a haven of learning and support for the community's elementary children.

The architecture of the school building is common among schools throughout southeast Ohio. The building is composed of red brick, with two stories in the front and a three-story addition in the back.

In large black letters, 20 feet above the ground, are the words, "Deering Elementary School." The paint is peeling off the letters in some places, revealing a gray color beneath. Dawson-Bryant Elementary is a sturdy but unremarkable building from the outside.

## Welcome to Dawson-Bryant Elementary School

As you walk into the building, the image of sterility vanishes. There is an immediate sense of warmth and community in this school building. The ambiance is apparent as you walk down the halls; teachers, staff, and children greet you with smiles. You soon come upon a copy machine sitting in the hallway — available for anyone with the proper codes to use. It is not that there is inadequate space in the office, but rather it is placed there for the convenience of those who need it

Pride is evident as you walk the halls. Everything is clean and orderly, and a homey atmosphere pervades. On the walls are examples of children's work from the various classrooms, as well as motivational statements identifying the goals of the school — the places that this school as a community wishes to go. As you continue past children and teachers, greetings are exchanged among all, including visitors. People smile, are busy, and go about their work purposefully, whether they are six or 60 years old.

As you walk the corridors, you transition from the old building to the new addition (the three-story addition in the back). A plaque notes that the work on the addition was begun in 1995. The architecture follows the scheme of the original school. The same images of purpose and comfort pervade this part of the building. Children's work is displayed throughout. As you walk by open classroom doors, you see children and teachers involved in a variety of activities, indicators that this is a place that not only is rich in community, but also is rich in learning and teaching opportunities.

## A Brief History

Dawson-Bryant Elementary is located in the southern Appalachian hills of Lawrence County, Ohio, just north of the Kentucky border. The 1951 building consolidated a number of one- and two-room schools throughout the Forestdale, Leatherwood, Springbranch, and Deering communities. When the building was opened for instruction, it housed grades one through eight and was called Deering Elementary. The next two decades brought multiple renovations, including a 1990 modular addition to the campus. This modular was financed by Ameritech and continues today as a third-grade classroom for distance learning. In 1993, district voters approved a levy for renovation and expansion. By the fall of 1996, the building had become twice as large as the original and included a third floor. All older aspects

of the building were renovated. The makeup of the student population changed with the increase in class space to a kindergarten-to-grade-five site. The district consolidated three former elementary buildings (Deering, Andis, and Monitor) into one districtwide Kindergarten-to-grade-five school: Dawson-Bryant Elementary (DBE). During the 1998-99 school year, the enrollment was 650 students. The staff included 35 certificated teachers, an elementary guidance counselor, and two building administrators. Seventy percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

## Catalysts for Change

> *A catalyst initiates and enables a process or series of events to proceed under milder and/or more efficient conditions than otherwise possible.*

The current learning community at DBE can be traced back nearly two decades to such things as media time, community collaboration (e.g., a library was staffed completely by volunteers), and intervention programs (e.g., Early Prevention of School Failure). However, the pace and volume of change escalated at the beginning of this decade with the hiring of new district and school administrators and the strategic positioning of administrative staff during 1990-92. These changes established the direction, events, and outcomes that are discussed within this case.

The commitment to educate all of the children and to do "whatever it takes" took shape. Strategies were designed to establish shared decision making, to build strong links with parents and the not-for-profit and business sectors, and to seek funding to support the shared choices regarding reform efforts. These concepts began with a few visionaries and gained momentum with the restructuring of the administration.

If structural/administrative changes serve as the first catalyst, then the second catalyst is the focus on establishing a collaborative network extending from the outside in, and the inside out. Within the super system of collaboration was a series of smaller collaborative accomplishments. Examples include efforts to secure external funding through grants and partnerships with the private sector, capital improvements, technology enhancements (outcome of the pursuit of external funding), the rudiments of a strong community network, and the structuring of a learning environment that focused on the success of each child. Consolidation provided a powerful environment for the staff and community to strengthen their roles as co-owners of the learning community. As steps were taken to consolidate, one glaring concern arose: a decline in student performance.

## The Roots of Reform at DBE: Declining Student Performance

Teachers and administrators at DBE can trace the origins of their change stories to a consensus about student performance. This is not unique; most schools that engage in reform legitimately claim that intended improvement in student learning is the central goal. However, most cannot point so clearly to specific problems in student performance underlying the changes undertaken. Often change is rooted more in teacher beliefs regarding a particular pedagogical approach (e.g., constructivism, multi-

ple intelligences, and curriculum integration) that they believe will result in enhanced student learning, rather than on specific evidence of problems in student performance. That is not so at DBE. Teachers were frustrated with declining standardized test scores, particularly in reading. This decline was confirmed through a Deering self-appraisal survey conducted in the fall of 1993 and corroborated by the declining achievement test scores and a kindergarten evaluation (Early Prevention of School Failure).

Concern was heightened because no major change in either curriculum or faculty had preceded this decline in student performance. Instead, as discussed more fully in Chapter Two, the community had undergone dramatic socioeconomic and demographic changes that modified the clientele served by the school. Industrial facilities had closed or relocated, resulting in a decline in the middle-/upper-income population. There was a decrease in average community income and less parental supervision as more families found the need to have both parents working full time. Although the community possessed economic diversity, the weight had shifted toward a more economically challenged setting. Student performance and attendance problems became issues demanding resolution.

Progress was being realized at DBE in improving student performance, and the school and community knew where they wanted to go and what they wanted to accomplish. However, resources in the district were insufficient to address the problems that were clearly identified. Ohio's Venture Capital initiative, the key catalyst, provided a vehicle to obtain additional resources to tackle the problem. Venture Capital supported the adoption/institutionalization of the Success for All program (SFA). SFA did not define the changes at DBE; rather, DBE embraced the model to further its development in directions in which it was already heading.

## The Success for All Program

When DBE was awarded a Venture Capital Grant during the second round of 1993 funding, the elementary staff chose the Success for All model for schoolwide reform. SFA stresses that school failure, particularly reading failure, is preventable for all students, regardless of background. The Venture Capital committee and building staff members readily accepted this ideal. The Venture monies allowed staff members to visit SFA sites, to participate in staff development to implement the model, and to acquire training materials.

The Success for All Program is an elementary school restructuring model that is a comprehensive, research-based, whole-school reform initiative. Dr. Robert E. Slavin, Dr. Nancy A. Madden, and colleagues at Johns Hopkins University led its development. The SFA Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that is now separate from Johns Hopkins University. Dawson-Bryant Elementary became a Success for All school in the fall of 1994, and in 1996 it was recognized as an SFA visitation site. DBE was among the first 100 school buildings in the country to become an SFA school. Today, there are over 1,100 SFA schools in 44 states.

***Success for All Components at DBE***

Dawson-Bryant Elementary adopted the following SFA program components:

- A 90-minute reading and integrated language arts block. During reading periods, grade one-to-five students are regrouped across age lines for 90 minutes so that each reading class contains students reading at one level. This eliminates the need to have reading groups within the class and increases the amount of time for direct instruction. All teachers provide reading instruction, including the Title personnel and the art teacher. Teachers utilize the SFA Roots and Wings program format and materials in this block.
- Reading tutors to work one on one with grade one-to-three students who have difficulty keeping up with their reading groups in 20-minute time blocks. DBE delivers this component through its certified Reading Recovery teachers.
- Assessments are completed every eight weeks for students in grades one through five. These data are used to determine whether the children are making adequate progress in reading. Regrouping can occur if the need arises at the beginning of the next eight-week block.
- Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that supports all the Success for All curricula. Students work together in partnerships and in teams, helping one another to become strategic readers and writers. Emphasis is placed on accountability, common goals, and recognition of group success.
- *Early Learning Programs.* Kindergarten teachers at DBE integrate SFA activities with the Peabody Language Development Kit program.
- *Getting Along Together.* A ten-day conflict-resolution program implemented at the beginning of the school year.
- *Family Support and Integrated Services.* A Family Support Team works with parents to ensure success of their children. The team focuses on promoting parent involvement, developing plans to meet the needs of individual students, implementing attendance plans, and integrating community and school resources. A typical team consists of the principal, community service and social workers, and other personnel.
- A site facilitator is selected from among the staff to facilitate the Success for All model implementation. DBE chose two site facilitators: the principal and a primary teacher.
- Professional development for the Success for All program requires training for all staff members prior to implementation. This training involves several follow-up visits by SFA program trainers and continuing SFA professional-development workshops through subsequent years.
- Success for All schools require at least an 80% staff commitment to implement. The elementary staff voted unanimously to implement SFA in 1994.

During the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years, Dawson-Bryant participated as an SFA pilot implementation site for WorldLab, a set of integrated science and social studies units. The school has not adopted the SFA mathematics program, which was still under development when the school joined the

SFA network. In the 1997-98 school year, Dawson-Bryant teachers began implementing the elementary component of the Saxon mathematics program, which was already in place at the middle and high schools.

An element of SFA that was particularly exciting for DBE was the Family Support Team. This team approach encourages involvement between the school and family that is positive and empowering to both families and students. The school became more proactive in assisting families to obtain much-needed resources. Home visits became part of the school day. Staff members can make referrals to the Family Support Team (FST), as well as add their expertise to the team in providing workable solutions to identified problems related to academic performance, behavior, or even attendance. Parents are considered an essential part of the Family Support Team. School personnel conduct family support meetings to ensure that parents feel free of intimidation and that they are welcomed in a collegial manner. The parents are considered an integral part of any decision made or action taken.

The DBE faculty chose the Success for All model based on the needs of their students. They felt that SFA would be the vehicle to organize resources, to focus on prevention and early intervention, and to ensure success for all students. The components of SFA, including the Family Support Team, advocate methodologies and strategies that allow a school to relentlessly pursue a quality education for each child and to obtain necessary support that will prevent any student from falling between the cracks.

## Consolidation

The actual consolidation of the three more contemporary elementary staffs began before the physical construction of the DBE building. All staff-development activities were offered and shared among the grade levels of each building. The superintendent encouraged and expected the building administrators to offer teacher support throughout this time. The board of education and administration supported activities that provided teachers and staff extensive input into curriculum, classroom design, and technology hardware selection for the planned Deering extension supported by the tax levy that passed in 1993. A spirit of cooperation ensued through these collaborative activities. The Venture award provided the capital, and the SFA program provided a clearer focus for improvement activities of the three school staffs. Specific examples of the efforts of the consolidated veteran staffs of Andis, Monitor, and Deering include the creation of a parent-school liaison position, an active curriculum/technology committee, implementation of the SFA reading program melded with Reading Recovery, and the family support teaming with agencies. The consolidation was completed with the staffs of Andis, Monitor, and Deering under one roof for the first time beginning in 1995-96.

## The Modified Calendar

With the completion of renovation and construction in 1994, the elementary building became air-conditioned and heated with one system. This upgrade allowed experimentation with a modified year-round student calendar for the 1997-98. The modified calendar was designed by a committee of par-

ents, teachers, administrators, and board of education members, and was it formally explored by a board-appointed committee during the 1996-97 school year. The committee felt the increase in school days would benefit the student body through extension activities offered by parent and community and local Ohio University Southern Center involvement. To alleviate the fear of change and allow for voluntary involvement by parents and children, it was decided that the elementary would offer a two-track calendar for the students. Students and their families were offered a choice of calendar, and the selection of the modified program was approximately 50% for each grade level. The modified students received additional remediation and enrichment classes by utilizing the extra 20 days built into their calendar.

Based in part on the promise of success, the board restructured the modified calendar committee during the 1997-98 school year to focus on possibilities for the middle and high school populations. The committee and district administrator recommended to the board to extend the modified calendar throughout the elementary and middle school with no option for parents. However, the board of education decided (three to two) not to accept the proposal. Their rationale was that some families with high-school-aged children could be split with two calendars. (See additional discussion in Chapter Three.)

## Enabling Technologies

During renovation and expansion, all electrical wiring was upgraded, and SchoolNet and SchoolNet monies provided funds to wire the building for a computer network. The office and every classroom was connected to the Internet via a T1 line located in the communication room. Teacher workstations and student computers were all Internet connected as well. All rooms were equipped with telephones, and staff members were given voice mail for communication. The telephone system monitors absence calls to homes and documents the number of incoming/outgoing calls to the rooms and offices. Along with homework, teachers can leave messages regarding upcoming events or ask for parent input on projects.

## Open Door to the Community

DBE strives to provide a two-way vehicle of communication between parents and the community. Currently, parent-teacher conferences are scheduled four times per school year, and more often if needed. Family Support Team meetings (an SFA program element) are held with agencies on a bi-monthly basis. Parenting classes are held twice a year (fall and spring). The elementary school administrator mails postcards to every student home every two months with upcoming events or tips for parents. Parents are encouraged to make suggestions for improvement. This close communication has developed over a number of years. The attitude has changed from *What can the parent do for us?* to *What can the school do to help the parent help their child?*

## The Dawson-Bryant Elementary School Timeline

What makes this school the place it is? How has this school become so cooperative, collaborative, and dynamic? What are the key factors that have collectively created this setting? Who has contributed to this success? What lessons have been learned thus far? What challenges lie on the horizon?

The DBE experience is a complicated and multifaceted story. The next two chapters examine this story in more detail. Technology is woven into these two chapters as it relates to the community (front porch) and to learning environments. The timeline (Table 1) provides an overview of the sequence of events that has carried DBE to the level it is at today. Special attention have been given to documenting progress and current views as a pivot for credibility. The final chapter frames the status, results, and implications of preceding discussions in light of the essential themes of community (i.e., from the front porch), learning environment, and corridors.

**Table 1. Dawson-Bryant Elementary School General, Historical Timeline, 1980-1999 (page 1 of 8)**

| DATE | PERSONNEL | EVENT | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| Late 1980s | Principal, staff & Ohio University — Southern Campus | Initiated Together We Can parent volunteer program and other paraprofessional programs | Programs created to train parents to work within the school and to help with their children |
| Pre 1980 to 1990 | Elementary staff & district | Media items purchased were very limited. Major purchases included Commodore 64s; beta video camera | Title Purchases<br>PTO and building<br>Principle fund to allow technology to enhance instruction. Use limited to remedial classrooms |
| 1981 | Volunteers | Started a library completely staffed by volunteers until 1996, when district employed a full time media specialist | Limited books and supplies had been available |
| Late 1980s | Kindergarten teachers and guidance office | Early Prevention of School Failure Program implemented | Realization of need for early intervention assessment tool needed |

**Dawson-Bryant Elementary School General, Historical Timeline, 1980-1999 (page 2 of 8)**

| DATE | PERSONNEL | EVENT | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-92 | Administration | New staff | 1990 – A new principal (one) for Monitor and Andis (pre-consolidation elementaries)<br>1992 – New superintendent and Andis/Monitor principal moved to Deering |
| 1990s | Early Chapter teachers | Make It/Take It Workshop for Parents | Program was to assist parents in creation of activities to help children at home |
| 1990 | Title coordinator and title staff | Purchased Apple LCs for kindergarten Early Language Program | Saw need for intervention in language program |
| 1991-present | Staff & administration | Actively sought input from community, parents, students and staff to assess needs | Needs assessments and surveys were compiled. Grants sought to address identified needs |
| 1991 | Appalachian Distance Learning Project (ADLP). Third-grade teacher and building principal involved in project with Ohio University College of Education & others | Start up of ADLP linking school with others via audio-video fiber connection<br>Overstaffed, technology enriched classroom | Need for collaborative professional development and change in preservice training at university level |
| 1991-92 | Staff and administration | Inclusion: planning, piloting of strategies | Helping at-risk students fit into grade-level groups |
| 1991-92 | Board of education | Joined the *DeRolph v. State* lawsuit as a plaintiff | The school board recognized the inadequacies of funding schools in the state of Ohio |
| 1992 | Principal & guidance counselor | Implemented Active Parenting program | Parents requested more help in dealing with parenting skills |

**Dawson-Bryant Elementary School General, Historical Timeline, 1980-1999 (page 3 of 8)**

| DATE | PERSONNEL | EVENT | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1992 | Principal & guidance counselor | Implemented Active Parenting program | Parents requested more help in dealing with parenting skills |
| 1992-93 | Parents, community members, teachers, and administration | Began the restructuring process and shared decision-making | Emphasis on learning strategies, collaboration, Total Quality Management, inclusion, thematic teaching, multi-aged grouping, non-graded primary, and technology training |
| 1992-94 | Teachers and administrators | Collaboration training with an emphasis on shared, school-based decision making | (1) Training provided by Ohio University faculty. (2) [Then] Deering Elementary was chosen from the Pilasco-Ross Special Education Regional Resources Center (SERRC) area for training in school-based decision-making |
| 1993 | Chapter teachers | Received computers 520s; 550s & 575s | Designated for use in first-grade teachers classroom |
| 1993-99 | Staff, parents and administration | Prepared grant applications for funding | Jennings Grant<br>Venture Capital Grant<br>Eisenhower Funding<br>Pioneering Partners<br>SchoolNet<br>SchoolNet Plus<br>Tech. Equity<br>Community Education Grant<br>ADLP Project<br>Telecommunity Grant<br>Family Partnership<br>Samson Grant monies used to fund liaison<br>Schools on the Move<br>School-Age Child Care Grant |

**Dawson-Bryant Elementary School General, Historical Timeline, 1980-1999 (page 4 of 8)**

| DATE | PERSONNEL | EVENT | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1993 | Teachers and specialists | Individual Educational Plan process to include inclusion | All teachers became involved in the new Individual Educational Plan process |
| 1993 | Board members, teachers, parents, community members, and administration | Exploring educational improvement models (Spring)<br>Formed Venture Capital Committee | Purpose to identify and meet the needs at [then] Deering Elementary |
| 1993 | Community, staff & board of education | Passed a $5.9 million building levy with 78% majority | Community recognized the need for updated facilities |
| 1993 | Staff, guidance and administration | Inclusion of developmentally and learning-disabled children in regular classrooms | Allowed least restrictive environment to become reality |
| 1993-99 | Staff members, administration, technology director | Technology training; additional software purchased; telephone service in every classroom, voice mail and homework hotline became accessible | Staff members and administrators began Novice Level Training as recognized by Ohio Instructional Leadership Technology Service (OILTS) 1998-99 |
| 1993-94 | Teachers and administration | Expectation of school consolidation | Critical point at which teachers and parents began to collaborate and began to recognize they had a voice and a key role to play in the shared decision-making process |
| 1994-99 | Staff, parents, students | Implementation of a whole school reform model Success for All | "Success for All" (SFA) model fit the needs identified by the school community |
| Spring 1994 | Venture Capital Committee (see above) | Submit application with 42 signatures: 9 parents, 26 teachers, 4 noncertificated staff, 2 specialists, 2 administrators | The school district community had identified SFA as the target program which was to be financed with Venture Capital funds |

**Dawson-Bryant Elementary School General, Historical Timeline, 1980-1999 (page 5 of 8)**

| DATE | PERSONNEL | EVENT | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1994 | Staff development | "Success for All" Family Support Team Training<br>Three days of initial training | Selected staff members, guidance, principal and 17 agencies participated in training by Dr. Barbara Haxby from Johns Hopkins University on Family Support. Special significance was that two days were to be free and had to be/were approved by teachers' union |
| Summer 1994-Spring 1996 | Staff and administration (from all three elementaries) | Initiation of Success for All (reading and community initiatives) | Operated in all three soon-to-be consolidated elementary schools. Communications via electronic mail, telephone, meetings, and traveling administrators |
| 1994-96 | Community, staff, and administration | Prepared for consolidation | Students were brought together for events, parents were brought together at joint PTO functions, and even the Little League teams were recognized to create a new, healthy melded/consolidated school community |
| 1994-99 | Family Support Team implemented and expanded | Parent liaison position created<br>Agencies became part of the school culture. In-house services became part of the school day | Liaison position gave a link to all parents<br>Agencies and school realized collaboration was beneficial for both |
| 1994-99 | Additional activities originated through involvement with parental involvement | Home Visits by staff members; Sunshine Club, Santa Network, BABY Book Club and Sewing Family Values | Activities continued to link services between school and home and service agencies. Staff became more aware and compassionate of the neighborhood community of their students |

**Dawson-Bryant Elementary School General, Historical Timeline, 1980-1999 (page 6 of 8)**

| DATE | PERSONNEL | EVENT | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1995 | Kindergarten teachers, principal, guidance counselor and community | Kinderfest | Spring festival designed to provide information about the school and programs |
| 1995 | DBE | Ohio's BEST (Building Excellent Schools for Today & the 21st Century) | DBE designated as Ohio's BEST Practices |
| 1995 | All staff members | Electronic mail availability in every classroom | Staff members became proficient in use of electronic mail |
| 1995 | Teacher computer workstations installed | Every homeroom teacher wired for electronic mail and office software | Ohio SchoolNet allowed teacher computer access for instruction training |
| 1995 | All staff | Visitation site for SFA | Building recognized by Dr. Nancy Madden as an SFA visitation site for other school districts |
| 1995 | Full-day, every day kindergarten | First in our county to initiate full-time kindergarten | Staff recognized the need for additional days in school for the at-risk population |
| 1996 | School-Age Child Care Program began for after school hours | Needs assessment identified this as a need for the parent who had working hours past the end of the day | Staff recognized students needed after-school child care to be provided at an affordable rate with a certified staff member in charge |

**Dawson-Bryant Elementary School General, Historical Timeline, 1980-1999 (page 7 of 8)**

| DATE | PERSONNEL | EVENT | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1996 | District elementary staffs | Completion of building renovations and consolidation of three elementary school staff & students | The board of education recognized that the school needed the facilities to continue its growth<br>Emphasis on building a new community. For example, every teacher, even those already teaching at Deering before it became DBE, had to move to a new room. All started on equal footing |
| 1997-99 | Second-to-fifth-grade teachers | Participated in Schools on Move LessonLabs | Teachers prepared lessons integrating technology within instruction. Lessons submitted to state for web page |
| 1997-99 | First-to-fifth-grade teachers | World Lab component of Success for All model. Became a pilot school for World Lab units | Implementation of thematic units of World Lab in Science and Social Studies Units of Practice |
| 1997-98 | Kindergarten-to-fifth-grade teachers, administrators and support personnel | Piloted a modified year round schedule within the school (School within a school concept) | School community recognized the need for additional days of instruction provided in a calendar that best suited student learning |
| 1996-99 | Art teacher and fifth grade teachers | Computer club | Implemented to provide hands-on training for students. These students are used to help staff members become proficient in technology hardware and software usage |

**Dawson-Bryant Elementary School General, Historical Timeline, 1980-1999 (page 8 of 8)**

| DATE | PERSONNEL | EVENT | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1997-98 | School staff | Transforming Learning Communities Project | Building was designated as a case study for the Ohio Department of Education with the University of Toronto and Ohio University |
| 1997 | School staff | Schoolwide title designation | Elementary staff became designated as a schoolwide project. This allowed better utilization of staff and resources for all students |
| 1997-98 | Second-to-fifth & Special resource teachers | Laptop computers purchased for teacher workstations | Laptops allowed for teacher use. This allows teachers to become more proficient in computer usage |
| 1998 | Staff members | Curriculum mapping | Project began to map all curriculum areas to state proficiency outcomes |
| 1998-99 | All staff members | Continuous Improvement Plan | District contracted with Dr. Larry Coble Center for Creative Leadership to help with Continuous Improvement Planning |
| 1999 | Guidance counselor, principal, staff and parents | Family Partnership Project for State of Ohio<br>Joyce Epstein model | Action Team will continue working to promote welfare of family–school partnership |

Chapter Two

# Making Sense of the Community Connection

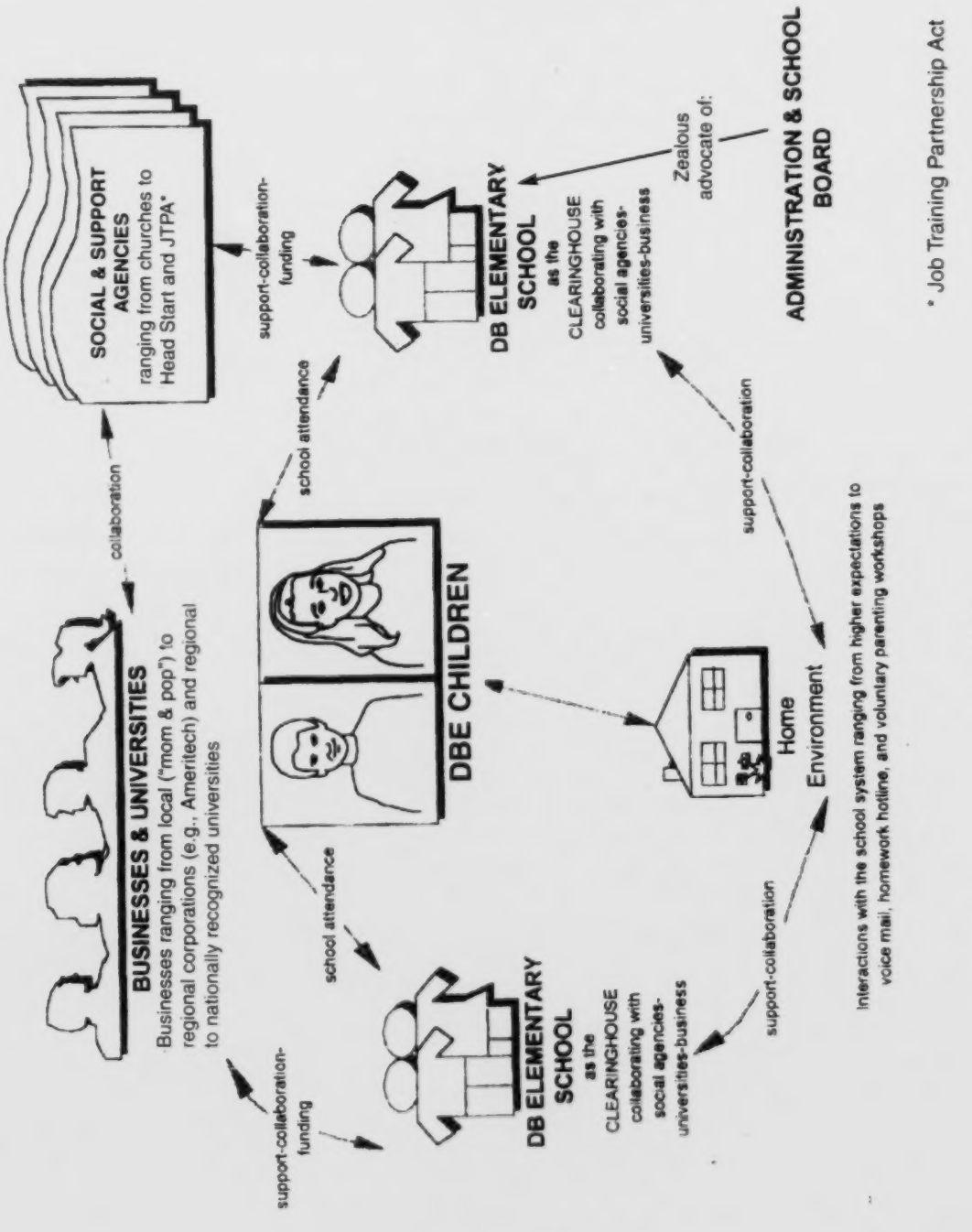
*The role of [our] school is to serve as a center point of community service.* – A DBE parent

One of the difficulties of describing the community connections and relationships — our view from the front porch — has been making sense of the myriad elements and events that comprise the connections between Dawson-Bryant Elementary and the community. One way to paint this aspect of the DBE portrait is with the brush strokes of the stakeholders, particularly the parents and educators at DBE. This is more easily said than done, because as we all participated within the activities and discussion, the research team became a part of the event and therefore vested in the group's interpretations. So, these descriptions represent first and foremost the views and interpretations of the DBE community. However, the views of the outside research team members cannot help but be woven in as well, since they began to also feel like members of the DBE community.

## Exploring Key Elements

A group met one winter day to explore how the community connection had grown as a result of local initiatives with the Success for All initiative as a pivotal point (see also timeline in Chapter One). A total of 10 representatives from all the stakeholder groups — parents, social support organization members, teachers, administrators and the research team (DBE and university staff) — began to explore and define how DBE fit in the community. We began with a focusing activity that asked participants to identify a list of key elements in the DBE connections with the community that extended beyond the school walls. One goal for the day was to generate a visual representation that embraced multiple views in one mind map (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Mind Map of Dawson-Bryant Elementary School.**



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The common elements that emerged from our discussion, to no one's surprise, were centered on the overall welfare of the DBE children. This was a particularly exciting moment for the case study team, because we heard — echoed from the multiple stakeholder groups — similar views of DBE as a school in the midst of positive change and growth. The alignments and shared vision of DBE by the varied stakeholders present, moreover, were reflective of the change literature describing successful local reform efforts. The need for system-wide and sustained improvement in an organization — any organization — requires participation by all of the stakeholders within the system or organization (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Senge, 1990; Tye, 1992). That participation was clearly evident among the members of the DBE community with us that day.

Equally notable was the consistency of recognition by the group of key events both inside and outside of the school that had contributed to the community connections. A summary of those elements can be found in Table 2.

One social agency member characterized this symbiotic and mutualistic relationship between DBE and the community as follows: "[The] parents of the school children feel connected to the school instead of intimidated by it because of the [DBE] people, events, and communications."

This same notion is reflected in a DBE administrator's remarks that to the open door policy that DBE maintains "empowers parents and staff through [varied opportunities for] partnerships."

## Our View From the Community Front Porch: A Mind Map

Within the mind map (Figure 1) lie the primary elements of home, child, school, administration, and school board, as well as the collaborating social support agencies, businesses, and universities. The overall portrayal represents an iterative and cooperative process among the multiple stakeholders for the welfare of the DBE children. In this mind map, the overall representation of a support network is central to the strength and overall success of relationships among these key elements. The DBE Elementary School is found in two places within the figure in order to maintain the flow of the image so that intersecting lines of connectivity are more easily interpreted.

Critical to this visual image are the connections between the groups, the school, and the home, all of which revolve around the children of DBE. Also of significance is the zealous advocacy by the central district administration. This represents the focus on the child at DBE and shows how the various stakeholders in the welfare of the DBE children interact. From the front porch of Coal Grove, Ohio, you can see clearly how the larger community works to support the school and each child within the school.

**Table 2. Key Elements in Connecting Dawson-Bryant Elementary With the Community**

| Key Element | Comments & Description |
|---|---|
| Communication | This ranged from communication between individual teachers and parents, to voice-mail and homework hotlines, to the sharing of goals and needs among parents [and] community leaders. This new, consistent communication created an "awareness of change" [for] the community and staff [regarding] agency and service integration. |
| Social Agency Involvement | Social support organizations feel connected to DBE and are given assigned, consistent space to work in when they are in DBE. This choice by the school administration was a way to demonstrate the value of and commitment to better and relationships with the social service agencies, which addresses not only students' but parents' particular needs. |
| Technology | One example of technology is that there are 300 computers in the building, all gathered from SchoolNet Plus and other external funds (excluding six computers from the general fund). |
| School Equity Lawsuit | The case continued at the time of the writing of the case study. It revolved around more equitable funding for smaller, economically disadvantaged districts, and school funding formulas. |
| Parent Liaison | This represents a "change of personnel roles and jobs" — a teacher was paid to be a 50% teacher and 50% parent liaison. |
| Superintendent | Don Washburn, Sr., is described as "curriculum and child centered," "supportive," open to ideas, and willing to support bold initiatives to improve school for the sake of the DBE children. Superintendent supported a proactive stance from within the school. |
| School Consolidation | With the consolidation of a series of small elementary schools into one — DBE — the community developed a central rallying point for the elementary children; inter-elementary school competition vanished. This was done over a period of 5 years (1992-1997) carefully, proactively, and clearly supported and facilitated by the superintendents. |
| Events | Parenting classes, school/community gatherings such as festivals for celebrations of success, and Santa's Network (to support particularly needy families during the holidays), provide for "rapport building and information [sharing]." |

## The School as a Clearinghouse

The metaphor of the school as a clearinghouse appealed to the group of parents, community members, and teachers. This became a focal point for discussion. The community liaison described this role as one of nurturing, noting that 30 years ago the school was an extension of the family; but that had faded as women moved into the work force. From that individual's perspective, DBE was again trying to become an extension of the family in a contemporary circumstance. This role implied that as with family, the school worked toward the welfare of the whole child so he/she may be healthy, safe, and prepared to learn.

In this context described above, the clearinghouse relates to the community network. However, this metaphor can be extended to curricular and learning environment matters which interlink to the community. The best example is the Success for All program. When DBE adopted the SFA program, it embraced the philosophy of SFA that included elements focusing on prevention, intensive early intervention, the belief that every child can learn, and relentlessness in the pursuit to help every child learn and succeed. Each of these elements has strong implications for and connections to the community, and all are overtly built into SFA.

As DBE continued to look inward at its limitations (e.g., self-appraisal survey completed by Deering staff in 1993) and sought solutions, ideas, and strategies, the clearinghouse took shape. This was and remains representative of the district commitment to empower and support its schools in evaluation of operations and implementation of strategies for improvement. The school district is committed to site-based management (although it has not been formally incorporated in the teacher contract), parental and community involvement, cooperation with the entire learning community, and changing or even waiving policies that impede progress in school improvements and student success (Dawson-Bryant School Venture Committee, 1994, p. 5).

Creating a central clearinghouse was not a stated outcome. The stated outcome was anything for the betterment of the DBE children; nevertheless, this opportunity has been embraced and has matured with time and effort. Many of the elements were already in some stage of implementation when Venture Capital and the SPA connection came on the scene (Table 1). Agency and project relationships with Head Start, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), Ohio Family and Children First Initiative, and Appalachian Distance Learning Project were already in place. Connections to the community through active parenting workshops, "Make it/Take it" parent workshops, and participation by parents in various school self-studies were commonly found among district-supported activities at the elementary school level. The school commitment to strengthening collaboration and developing site-based management furthered links and interactions with local and regional universities (e.g., Ohio University) and faculties and State Department of Education agencies.

Consider also that the elements found in the web were, to one degree or another, already in place, even before the passing of the building bond levy in 1993 (Table 1). When one considers the magnitude and scope of this emerging but not-yet-networked array of human resources, it is not surprising that the community promoted and supported the building levy by passing it with a 78% majority — quite a feat in an economically depressed area. Three factors established by the district, school staff and administration contributed to the desirable position for DBE. Those elements were: (1) winning the Venture Capital award; (2) consolidation (1994) and recognition of SFA as a model (1993-94); and (3) development of a web of resources and strategies for improvement of student performance which resonated with the goals and developmental efforts as far back as the 1980s. The success of these multiple, far-sighted initiatives enhanced and focused efforts by the community, teachers, and staff. DBE found itself at a crossroads and clearly assumed the responsibilities that ensued, not losing site of the original goal: to improve the learning conditions and opportunities for every child.

The balance of this chapter is devoted to connections and collaborations with parents and community organizations. This is not to de-emphasize the role of the central district administration and the collaborating institutions, such as Ohio University and its southern campus in Ironton. Rather, it allows us to focus within a finite space on the more unique aspects of DBE, the roles of the stakeholders, and the steps that helped set these elements in place.

Consistent with the school's emphasis on community involvement and the SFA approach to family support, the staff at Dawson-Bryant has undertaken a wide variety of initiatives that collectively comprise the family support component of the school's reform efforts. The Family Support Team, consisting of the principal, guidance counselor, parent liaison, and representatives from 17 local social and community agencies, is the linchpin. In addition to coordinating supportive interventions for individual children and families in need, the Family Support Team model emphasizes partnerships with outside agencies and increased parental involvement more generally in providing programs and services for all students. Some outgrowths of the support team approach include creating a part-time parent liaison position, establishing a school-aged, part-time child-care program for after-school hours, parenting and family values classes, strengthening the volunteer program, and delivery of health and nutritional services on-site.

## Voices from the School Community: Themes

One cold winter morning, 13 of us convened to explore and improve our understanding of the community connections and DBE's role as a transforming learning community. As a warm-up, we began by telling stories about the evolving learning environment. Though unplanned, this became an emotional time as people shared their stories about themselves, their children, and past interactions with the larger community.

Two particular themes emerged in this discussion. The first was that of the confidence of the parents in their children's education at DBE. Parents see the value of DBE through their children's enthusiasm for school and for their teachers. One parent shared the following story:

> *I went to school here 20 years ago. I was six years old, and I guess that then I didn't notice it [until] I got older how involved the teachers are with the students. My little girl, she don't ever want to come home from school. I mean, she don't. I mean she loves being at home, but she [even] likes going through the intercession [a special fun week set up for the children in between terms who are on the alternative schedule of "year-round" schedule]. If I had to tell her that she couldn't go, she'd probably throw a fit on me. She goes to the day-care facility that they offer [a "latchkey" program] and she just really has a wonderful time. She talks about all the teachers; she comes home and tells me how she met this teacher and they did this — you know, everything that they do. And that makes me feel good, because I think that she is getting the education that she needs, and she knows that all the teachers are here to help her.* – A parent

The teacher's role as helper gives the parents confidence and, in many instances, has won parents over, creating powerful advocates within the community. This was captured by a story about a problem between a teacher and a student.

> *Last year was probably my most memorable year, because my son did not like his teacher. We supported the teacher, because we didn't think that our child should get away with the things he was getting away with. We worked with the staff and with the administration and we worked through the problems. I was really impressed with the way the staff and the administration handled that problem. And at the end of the year, my son liked his teacher. It was just a good experience for him and myself, and we now don't always expect these things in school. . . . It was a turbulent year, but we had good outcomes. It was really pleasing.* – A parent

The second theme came from the teachers' and the administrative staff's stories which tell of caring, respect, and commitment to the children and their overall welfare. The elementary school guidance counselor and Family Support Team facilitator often speaks of the need to extend your hand first. This philosophy has forged strong bonds between community and school. The community has and continues to frequently take the first step, as in this instance, in making a new administrator feel welcome.

> *I'll never forget my 40th birthday. That's a milestone in itself, but I was principal two buildings over. I was out at the country Andis schools. I got a call from the superintendent ,and he said "happy birthday." And I thought, "this is nice — this is really warm, my birthday is recognized." It felt good. I get in the car and I drive to the village (Coal Grove). They have "Happy 40th" and my name on the marquee at the supermarket! So not only did the superintendent know, but also the whole community knew. . . . It's kind of stuck with me . . . the*

*kids enjoyed it tremendously and I went along with it. It was just a different atmosphere than I've experienced in other school systems. . . . it was a good first year into the district.* – An administrator

The last story, from a teacher, is very telling for two reasons. First, it describes the significance of the school in the community, beyond just that of a formal education institution. Sadly, it also tells of the economic hardship which some DBE students' experience in the lives. This story was told in a soft voice, filled with emotion.

*Well, this story probably stands out most in my mind, maybe more than anything I've ever experienced in education. It happened a few years ago. We had a child in kindergarten; I hope that I can get through this without crying. I mean it's bad. And the child was here for two or three months and the mother said that she just couldn't — she didn't see anything happening and she was going to pull her child out and just wait until next year and put him back in kindergarten. And it was probably the middle of January one morning, and I don't know if I was on breakfast duty or what, but in came this child, and he wasn't wearing a coat and we didn't know why he was there. He had not been to school for a long time. We found out that he came for breakfast. He was hungry. He left from Sunrise, which is about two miles from here . . . he had gotten out of bed on his own. His mom didn't even know that he was out of the house yet, and he came to school to eat. . . . I guess that it was at this time that I realized that we are the best part of [some of] these kids' lives.* – A teacher

## Empowerment through Collaboration and Partnerships

As we listened to the people speak of their experience as parents of DBE children, the administrator's comment (see above) about DBE's open-door policy was validated. The parents feel empowered: they have a voice and see themselves as a members of the school community. This is reflected in an attitude of mutual cooperation. One of the university research team members captured the point well, noting that, "Most schools come to the parent and ask, what can you do for us? At DBE, the question is, what can we do for you?"

The parents who support and are motivated to be a part of the school mirror this commitment to the welfare of the child through the improvement and support of the welfare of the family.

## The Two-Way Street: From the Corridors and Classrooms to the Community Front Porch

### *Extending a Hand*

The community gives, the school gives, so who started it all? History suggests that it is a two-way street. However, it is the school — teachers, staff, and administration — that holds the power and responsibility to offer its hand first and continue to hold that hand out, even in difficult times. One experience— that of the counselor and Family Support Team facilitator — captures this extended hand best. In this instance, respect and patience turned what could have been a very difficult and even dangerous circumstance into very positive one.

### A Story

*We had just gotten a new principal at one of the schools that we used to have [this was prior to consolidation], when we still had three elementaries. [Now you need to understand] that the previous year we had had a parent chase the preceding principal and threaten to do him bodily harm and whip him . . . it was at the end of the year and nothing was solved. [With this background, let's fast forward a year.] It was parent-teacher conference night, the first of the year, and this father was coming to school and [we had heard that] he was angry. We had a report that he may be carrying a gun. He did not like the way the school was being run. I was new to the district and I didn't know anybody, and I was kind of called on for reinforcement to talk with this gentleman that I had never met. I stepped outside just to see if he was going to show up. [As I'm standing out there] a fellow walked up to me and he didn't seem upset or anything, and I said, "How are you doing?" "All right," he replied. "Looks like you just got off work." He said, "Yes, I've been welding. I'm doing some burning." We got to talking about welding and just shot the breeze a little bit. I eventually walked back into the building and went upstairs to help the other teachers and the principal. [The gentleman I had talked to] made his way in the building and [it turned out] the guy that I had talked with outside was the guy that had threatened to whip everybody in the whole building – and I didn't doubt that he could do it! When he came in to talk with me, it was, "Hi, how are you doing?" And what we did — we didn't tell him what to do, and it wasn't out of fear or anything like that — I just asked him what he thought was best. I asked him what he thought would be best for his daughter. . . . And to jump ahead, his daughter was placed in special education, excelled, made wonderful improvement, was a part of the school community, athletic teams, won a governor's award, and mom and dad went with her to Columbus to accept. Mother has since been president of the parent-teacher organization. That father has been president of the Little League. [They were] a family with a lot of pride. Maybe not much education, but they have contributed so much to the community. . . . Every time I see them I have to smile, because I think this is a guy that first approached the school and he was going to whip somebody or anybody. And now he is a valuable asset, simply because we valued him and we brought him into decision making . . . . That is the*

*scariest thing that I thought that I would have to face, and it wasn't at all. I think it's a reflection of the spirit of the community, the way we value parents and their children, and that's why we are here. We work together.*

### *Clasping that Hand*

One parent, in reflecting on teachers and parents communicating, stated clearly, "I think it is a two-way street. I don't think it falls on just the teacher to communicate." Communication does not always have to be in the form of newsletters or calls home, either. The DBE PTO (Parent Teacher Organization — led by the parents) has sponsored festivals, auctions, and craft fairs. These activities are supported by the local businesses through donations of goods, money, and time. Another extension into the community, in particular reaching to those most needy, are service networks that distribute clothing and Santa's Network, which targets children and their families who would have no celebration at Christmas without assistance. (In recent years, Santa's Network has reached as many as 70 different children and families in one season.)

When parents are asked to describe DBE "to a friend moving to the area . . . who is looking for a good school for their elementary-school-aged child," the descriptions are ones of safety, caring, sensitivity, and recognition of improvement of school learning environment from the parents' perspective.

> *I would definitely suggest Deering (DBE) because of . . . safety, security, the communication.*
>
> *[The opportunities to learn] are better. It has really increased in the last three to four years. I look at [my child and] I'm pleased with what he's learning.*
>
> *I think they (the children) are supported here in everything they do, strongly supported. And not just the academic, but the families too . . . my opinions here [as a parent and volunteer] are always valued . . . we had a death in the family last year and the staff was ready to pitch in and help.*
>
> *The building is wonderful . . . from what I've heard, our programs seem to be different from a lot of others — the reading and technology, for instance. The teaching seems to be on a different scale. . . . For a long time we weren't considered as that bright a school. We didn't get high marks or ratings, but it seems over the past few years it has just zoomed.*

### *The Parents as Members of the Learning Community*

A separate and more formal strategy was also used to capture the parents' views of DBE and their relation to the school. In their paper introducing six new techniques to explore and understand school change, Ainscow, Hargreaves, and Hopkins (1995) note limitations in current research regarding the process of change in schools. Included are the reliance, almost exclusively, on organizational culture literature relating to school effectiveness studies and the fluid, anecdotal portraits found in school

improvement works — both of which, in the above authors' opinion, leave a conspicuous absence of emphasis on outcome. They proposed a series of user-friendly techniques, which complement the ethnographic tradition of providing rich descriptions, supporting the portrait from another perspective, adding to the validity of observations (Mathison, 1988), and discussing the processes of a transforming learning community. Their data, shared below, help to verify and triangulate evidence of the effectiveness and success of the DBE efforts to build healthy school-community connections.

One of first techniques we employed was The Experience of Change (Ainscow et al., 1995), which is a data collection tool designed to gather information about the feelings of the participant individuals — in this instance the parents of DBE children — regarding changes in DBE. We used this technique with five different parents. The technique uses a series of words ranging from very positive to very negative, but it selects those personalized words that can be added. These words are sorted into four subsets on sorting cards according to the following categories: *often, sometimes, hardly ever,* and *it doesn't seem relevant.* The participant is asked to sort the stack of cards and then the conversation revolves around the respondent's chosen words that were put in the "often" category. (See Appendix B for the data-gathering matrix, with a full listing of words ranging from *very positive* to *very negative.)*

The consistency of the results was remarkable (Table 3). The parents reflected a positive view of DBE, noting by their choice of words that they all felt committed, enthusiastic, confident, supported, valued, pleased, interested, and satisfied. With the exception of one individual, all of the "experience of change" words selected and placed in the often and sometimes felt categories were positive ones.

In two exceptions, a negative wor — "anxious" — was chosen. For these individuals, the anxieties were reflections of recent memories. One was related to taking a child to the first day of kindergarten, a landmark in their child's life, which produces anxiety among most parents. The other had to do with a child struggling to do well and behave in class.

**Table 3. Frequency Count of Words Used by Parents to Describe Their View of DBE (N = 5)**

| *Category* | *Total Number of Responses (Frequency Count)* |
|---|---|
| ++ very positive words | 31 out of a possible* 40 |
| + positive words | 19 out of a possible* 20 |
| - negative words | 0 out of a possible* 20 |
| --very negative words | 2 out of a possible* 32 |

**Out of a possible refers* to the total number of words in this category multiplied by number of parents included (e.g., for *very positive* there are 8 positive words and 5 parents, therefore 8 words x 5 parents = 40 responses).

## The Roles of the Success for All Program and the Social Agencies

Along this two-way street, between the front porch and the corridors and classrooms of DBE, you also find evidence of the connections to various service agencies. The more conservative view of the school's role in providing social support services for children is that schools should focus on the primary goal of educating the children. Astuto and his colleagues (1994), in their book, *The Roots of Reform: Challenging the Assumptions that Control Change in Education*, note that it is an "extremely limiting assumption" (p. 31) to ignore a group of possible impediments created by social and economic conditions to children's capability and readiness to learn. They recommend that, "To fulfill their educational mission, schools must cooperate with social and welfare agencies or form intercessor organizational arrangements to provide child and youth services" (Astuto et al., 1994, p. 33).

### *Success for All as an Organizer*

The relationship between Dawson-Bryant Elementary and outside agencies has been both successful and rewarding for the school, parents, and community. The school sought help from service and social agencies as part of the school restructuring program, SFA, in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University, the SFA sponsor. Workshops began in October 1994 with follow-ups over time at DBE and at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. The community aspect of SFA continues to expand and is owned by more than just the school. This history of success has more recently included extending the model into the middle and high school levels.

The Success for All initiative actually began before the Venture Capital award; however, Venture Capital served as a primary source of funding to support and extend initial efforts. Key elements of the SFA helped first Deering and then DBE to address several critical needs previously identified through district self-studies:

- *students entering kindergarten significantly below national language development averages*
- *students failing and being retained at grade level*
- *lack of parental involvement in their children's education*
- *parent training needs in techniques to help their children succeed scholastically*

SFA is more comprehensive than a community focus. For community purposes, the critical elements of SFA were those of intensive early intervention ranging from one-on-one tutoring to working with parents and social agencies (medical services, etc.) to assure student attendance (Slavin et al., 1996). These goals were realized through continual cooperative relationships between parents, the DBE, and all appropriate agencies.

## Family Support Team and Parent Liaison

The Family Support Team (FST) is a pivotal element of the SFA program. It was instituted as a part of first Deering and then Dawson-Bryant Elementary's commitment to school improvement to effectively serve the needs of the children. The FST was designated to meet the following fundamental goals:

1. *success for every child*
2. *empowerment of parents through partnership*
3. *integration of services to children by utilizing a home/school/community team approach*

These goals allowed the newly designed team to focus on a series of specific needs that had been defined through self-study, school staff reflection, and application/reapplication for Venture Capital (first in 1993 and then again — successfully — in 1994). These three goals complement the goals of connecting with the community (e.g., Total Quality Management training with Allied-Signal Corporation and provision of computer training from Dow Chemical) and helping all children to succeed (e.g., inclusion and institutionalizing Reading Recovery). Also, reflecting back on the role of clearinghouse, the FST was a key element of reform for the elementary school, which had positioned itself to help all of its children succeed. The FST focused its actions on the following:

1. *school attendance (goal of 96%)*
2. *school-based intervention*
3. *parental involvement*
4. *school-community integration of services*

A clear set of strategies was defined that provided a two-pronged response. One was to solve existing problems, and the second was to prevent others from occurring. Pivotal to this was the philosophy to remain positive and supportive, granting equal footing and status to the members of the Family Support Team. The list of elements that follows portrays the overall game plan for forging strong links among parents, service organizations, and school.

- *Start small.*
- *Be realistic.*
- *Stay family-focused.*
- *Make creative use of resources.*
- *Keep parents and community informed and involved.*
- *Provide linkage with community-based services.*

- *Establish developmentally appropriate classrooms.*
- *Expand preschool, Head Start, and extended-day kindergarten.*
- *Provide one-on-one tutoring to support classroom instruction.*
- *Give constant, immediate feedback to students.*
- *Organize a media resource room for parents, staff, and agencies.*
- *Establish ongoing diagnostic assessment for evaluation.*

A sampling of some of the early connections to local service agencies includes: Lawrence County Head Start; Lawrence County Health Department; Lawrence County Children Services, Family Guidance; Women, Infants and Children Program; Shawnee Mental Health; Lawrence County Juvenile Court; Lawrence County Probate Court; Pilasco-Ross Special Education Regional Resource Center; and Lawrence County Restructuring Committee.

The creation of the parent liaison was an immediate by-product of the development of the FST. This position was initially funded by a health service agency with support for a half-time position, thus illustrating the flexibility and support of the central administration. After the first year, the district assumed all expenses, paying the full salary for the split teacher-parent liaison position. In recent years, the liaison position has been funded through statewide Title monies.

The facilitator/chairperson for the FST was drawn from existing staff and supported on existing salaries. Duties were adjusted and redistributed as needed; in truth, those sharing such duties had to work harder.

## Who Is Involved?

The two positions described above serve as a focal point for organization, but their real value is to coordinate services and address needs in a benevolent fashion (SFA philosophy). The choice of who is on a FST or who travels with the parent liaison for home visits is context-based.

The FST facilitator/chairperson assembles the team based on a referral that might come from parents, agencies, or teachers. The FST is assembled based on needs that dictate agencies, specialists, and DBE teaching staff. At times, the role of facilitator has been shared with the technology specialist. When it first was instituted, the facilitator estimated that it took 20% of his time. As a result of successful implementation and need, the demand rose to, occasionally, half of that person's time. It has since declined as other DBE teachers and administrators have begun to share in the duties. FST meetings are ordinarily bi-monthly and are scheduled in advance. A pre-meeting with the parent occurs to explain who will be attending, their purpose, and to remind the parent that "you're the boss, and I'll [FST facilitator] conduct the meeting."

This formal structure is supported and extended into the homes by the parent liaison, though the parent liaison also acts independently of the FST activities and may provide field follow-up. The parent

liaison coordinates travel with teachers and staff for assistance, for experiences, or for information gathering. When a teacher is more familiar with the home situation, the teacher may be more successful with classroom-based interventions. In recent years, the liaison position has been funded through Schoolwide Title monies. Every year since the position was created, the needs assessment from staff and community rate it as a vital position that must continue.

## An Example of Agency Collaboration

One such collaborative agency is Shawnee Mental Health Services. The Shawnee Mental Health Services school liaison, who is in DBE twice a week, echoed many of the same points that the parents identified as critical components between school and community. Members of outside service agencies recognized that people, communications, and events are important and have contributed to DBE's success and growth. At DBE, mental health liaisons, school-based social workers, and activities that bring adults together "to build rapport and share information," such as the Fall Festival and the Health Fair, are common. Such events serve to bind DBE stakeholders into a community. In the research teams' experience, these programs are unique among schools nationally; at DBE, however, such programs are considered part of the everyday program. The role of the service agencies, in this instance the Shawnee Mental Health Services, was explained best by a parent relating a personal experience.

> *Last year my cousin was sick . . . she was bed-ridden and didn't recover. My daughter had been with her often since she was an infant, and she was like a second mom. . . . My daughter had a really hard time dealing with it. The Shawnee person came in to talk to her, and it so nice that she could. It made a huge difference. I wouldn't have gotten counseling for [my daughter], but here it was available and it was great. That kind of thing means a lot . . .*
> – A parent

Shawnee Mental Health Services began working with the students and parents of the DBE school community in October 1994. The agency was included with 17 other service and social agencies to become part of the elementary school Family Support Team model as a part of the Success for All school initiative (see below for further discussion). The elementary school Family Support Team members collaborated with Shawnee Mental Health Services staff and discussed techniques and services that would best serve their students. Shawnee Mental Health Services has provided summer self-esteem camps for the elementary school at-risk students at no cost to the families or school district. The district provided facilities, volunteers from the staff, and coordinated lunches and incentives from local businesses and food vendors. The agency has provided on-site service to students who are referred for service through the school system. A mental health counselor works at the school two to three days a week.

The Shawnee Mental Health Services works with the parent liaison to target students experiencing difficulties with school absence and tardiness problems. The SFA training provided models for attendance problems. One effective technique that the elementary school practices is the Sunshine Club. The

Sunshine Club meets twice weekly in the morning at breakfast time to talk about the importance of attendance. The students are chosen to attend if they are experiencing problems with attendance. They enjoy breakfast with a Shawnee health worker, staff member or the parent liaison, and share in a variety of games and activities that lend to discussion of the importance of regular school attendance. The students have incentive charts and are rewarded with certificates and tokens such as stickers for their positive attendance. Parents are notified and encouraged to participate with the child. The club is non-threatening and operates with the goal of increasing student attendance.

Sewing Family Values involves the child and his/her parents through an after-school program. Families that are experiencing difficulties in the areas of behavior, attendance, and/or academic performance are invited. The students and their parents are encouraged to work together on a family quilt and share in confidence and team-building games. The students serve their parents their evening meal, and when the program is finished, parent volunteers and staff sew the individual pieces together into a quilt. The activities offered at the after-school program help families explore how they can help each other and help their children become more successful students. Games involving little financial contribution are taught. The meal is provided to demonstrate the value of the family time together. This program is a four-week project.

Shawnee Mental Health offered DBE, through a Samson Grant, the services of the mental health worker within the school. The school district provided a parent liaison position to help facilitate and work not only with the mental health worker, but also with all other agencies trained with the staff during the initial SFA training sessions in the fall of 1994.

## A Community Visit with the Parent Liaison

One of the unique privileges the lead researcher had while collaborating with DBE was the opportunity to do home visits with the parent liaison. In the instance below, the liberty of writing in the first person has been taken to make the story more realistic. Included here is one vignette from an afternoon adventure.

One of the parent liaison's key responsibilities is to reach out to and spend time with the families of the DBE children. At DBE, the focus is for the sake of the child, but when the parent liaison goes on the road, though her primary concern is for the child, she focuses on the parents/adult caretakers of the child, as well. Many of the trips are to the homes of the more disadvantaged and needy of the DBE children. This would be the case this day.

The parent liaison is notorious for doing one home visit, but while you're out, there it seems you have to go to one or two others, too! To add the adventure, the roads wind up down through the hills and hollows north of the Ohio River. The parent liaison drives fast and she drives well; somehow, it just kind of adds to the whole experience.

## Field Notes

*So we jumped into the parent liaison's (PL) Jeep Cherokee and took off towards Tabor Ridge. Now, I had been advised that on Tabor Ridge, the further out you go, the rougher the road gets and the less friendly the people are. They have signs that say, "No Trespassing," and they mean it. In this instance, we weren't going that far up the ridge. We were going to visit a family that had just moved in. The children were still in school at this point in the day. We pulled up to a single-wide mobile home on a cold January morning and went up and knocked on the door. The goal was to make a home visit to see how they were doing. The PL wanted to encourage the mother to connect with Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Also, the PL had half a dozen large garbage bags full of clothes that she collected from one of her sisters in Columbus (via a church). So, an ancillary element on our home-visit agenda was to make sure that any clothes that this particular family needed they could have from the collection in the back of the Jeep.*

*We arrived at the single-wide very soon (remember, we went fast!). There was very little around it, except for a fairly new Ford Escort parked in the gravel drive. We walked up onto the front porch and knocked on the door. A young woman, probably in her late 20s or very early 30s, opened the door. As I looked into her face, it was obvious that life had not been easy for her and she seemed old for her years. The PL immediately focused on the mother and began a very cordial and positive conversation about moving in, jobs, how the children were doing.... I listened with one ear, but looked around the visible part of the mobile, a rather empty but clean living-dining-kitchen area. The PL had advised this mother that she was coming and later noted to me that the mother had obviously cleaned up the home in anticipation of the visit. There was a chair, a TV, a twin bed that was doubling for a couch, and a table with two chairs. There were a few dirty dishes in the sink and what looked like a somewhat dried-out catfish steak sitting on a piece of foil on the range. The range door was open. Apparently leaving the oven on and the door open provided the heat for the entire trailer. As I looked into the gaping oven door and saw the electric element burning bright red, it occurred to me that the element would burn out soon because they aren't made to heat a room; they are made to heat a small, enclosed space. Meanwhile, the PL's conversation regarding job opportunities carried efficiently forward. The mother nodded her head, entering into the two-way discussion.... However, the general response to the PL's encouragement was essentially, "Well, maybe I'll get to it tomorrow." Soon the conversation turned to the issue of heat. The woman indicated to us that they needed $175 to make a deposit on a propane tank and a tank full of gas so they could fire up the gas heater in the trailer. Otherwise, the oven was it. No heat in January, because they were short $175. That hit me very hard.*

*The conversation then turned to the clothing that we had out in the Jeep. Up to this point we had not met the woman's husband, who she had indicated was asleep in another room. We went out and opened the back of the Jeep and started sorting through the clothes — talking about her children, talking about her, pulling clothes out, trying to find things that would fit one of the family members, as well as other useful items, such as blankets. The PL also had noted some specific needs of the children, having observed them at school,*

*and was working on those predetermined priorities quietly, without insulting the mother's pride, integrity, or independence. About that time the husband came out. He was a slender fellow with an untrimmed beard, medium-length hair, and wore a jeans jacket. He had the look of someone who had also had a hard life. He approached us cautiously, and the woman introduced us. I shook his hand and we began to include him in conversation regarding the clothing choices.*

*Soon the sorting was over, and we carried the new clothes back to the mobile. The PL finished her conversation, punctuating the importance of connecting with the JTPA to explore job opportunities and to seek job training. This was important, because it would help them remain eligible for federal assistance until they could find a job. During the walk back to the mobile, I had asked them where they had come from. The mother indicated that they had come from Indiana. When asked why they had come back to this part of Ohio, she simply said, "We got folks here." My next question was, "In the area?" "No, over in Huntington" (probably 25 miles from their home).*

*One last noteworthy event occurred. As we dropped the clothes off and were about to depart, the gentleman wasn't sure exactly how, but I sensed he wanted to say thank you. He kind of looked at us and smiled. I put my hand out, and he shook it with more vigor than I anticipated he would have and looked at me and said thank you. On reflection, I think he had wanted to thank us, but he didn't want to be disrespectful and reach out and touch the PL's hand, but he was willing to shake mine. We wished him well and blazed off for the next visit in the jeep. . . .*

## Heading Problems Off at the Pass

These kinds of collaborations are successful at DBE for two reasons. The first is the philosophy of benevolence — the disposition to do good — in DBE, for the good of the child. The second is to serve as facilitators, not adjudicators.

In some settings, parents blame the schools for poor performance, and the schools blame the parents. That is more difficult to do when you are working together. There is a critical underlying assumption in this strategy: that of respect. "We do not call parents in, promise that we will work *with* them, and then tell them what to do!" The pivot is to make the parents feel valued, by honestly valuing their position and needs.

The developmental sequence first at Deering and then at DBE was to connect with the parents first, then to reach to the agencies and businesses. In the case of agencies, it is *how can we help each other.* In the case of business, the school needed resources and support, and the businesses needed clients. Parents support local businesses that support the school (e.g., a fundraiser using cash-register receipts).

The DBE staff members constantly tap each other, parents, and community members for awareness and assistance. In a rural area or a defined community, people provide one another advice about how to

solve problems and work successfully with individuals and agencies. This informal network is critical to success and efficiency of services at DBE.

Turf wars between agencies occasionally crop up, usually over service provision and/or protocols. The FST serves effectively as a mediation place, making choices to help the family and child. DBE acts as an advocate, but not as a director of services, consistent with the clearinghouse approach to multi-service delivery through the school.

## Informal Connections

When an institution establishes a series of clear goals and an identifiable network of support, informal structures are an exciting by-product. This stems from the philosophy of "if you want to have a friend, be a friend." Reflecting back on the parent and agency comments, this background network and its benefits are apparent.

Other instances are less subtle. As a part of the district commitment to develop a shared decision-making model in DBE, teachers from DBE attended a Total Quality Management seminar with Allied-Signal truck drivers. Allied-Signal paid for the workshops. Later, Allied-Signal needed hands-on computer training for some staff. They came to DBE, and the DBE staff served as trainers. A ripple: Later, Dow Chemical employees came, as well. DBE is always willing to extend their hand first. The result is a mutualistically beneficial partnership with the community for the betterment of the children of DBE.

## The Case for Inquiry at DBE Reaches All the Way to the Front Porch

The staff, volunteers, teachers, and administrators at DBE are attuned to the needs and health of the whole child. Inquiry as an approach in this caring environment is pivotal as a way to identify the needs of each child and orchestrate a response according to the need and circumstance. The emphasis on inquiry into the family circumstances surrounding the performance of students identified as academically and socially at risk is a key dimension of inquiry at DBE. Identification of students potentially at risk is apparently built into the eight-week progress checks on students through the reading program, which ensures that all students are being considered in a systematic way for the full spectrum of needs. Encouragement and support for teachers to conduct home visits is mentioned (though in reality, the bulk of the visits are made by just a few of the staff). The Family Support Team meetings are the highlight of family-support-focused inquiry activity. In addition, there have been periodic surveys of parent concerns and needs.

Kernan-Schloss and Plattner (1998) suggest that to practice what they call "public engagement," you must listen first. Listening is a key element of inquiry in a school setting. The DBE faculty and staff have always listened and cared about the children of their community. What has occurred in recent years might be looked at as a heightened commitment to community action for the good of the child. The staff and administration rightfully give credit to the Success for All model, which, as noted above, played a significant role in helping DBE develop the broader view of curricular reform that reaches into the community. SFA served as a significant catalyst for a more organized approach to an existing commitment to the whole child's well-being. The school and the community have embraced that commitment and have carried forward in the development of DBE as a dynamic learning community. Through the formation of this community, which focuses on the whole well-being of the child, academic performance has improved notably; this was the original concern that fueled the effort begun in 1994 using Venture Capital. Noteworthy, too, is the "consistent and zealous" advocacy by the school district superintendent and his administration for improvement that is provided through both leadership and support.

The model DBE community connection and support network is useful and generalizable, provided there is the human resource willing to invest the time and energy to make it so.

Chapter Three

# The Learning Environment: Corridors, Classrooms, and Community

The corridors of Dawson-Bryant Elementary reflect the dynamic, expanded roles of the DBE teachers (Anderson, 1998). These changes span the formal and informal structures that govern teachers' work in the school; they were refined and focused through Success for All training and curriculum implementation. The roots of these structures can be explored through the interactions and outcomes that build professional communities governing teachers' work (Kruse et al., 1994; Sergiovanni, 1994). In turn, this professional community development is reflected in the changing classroom environment.

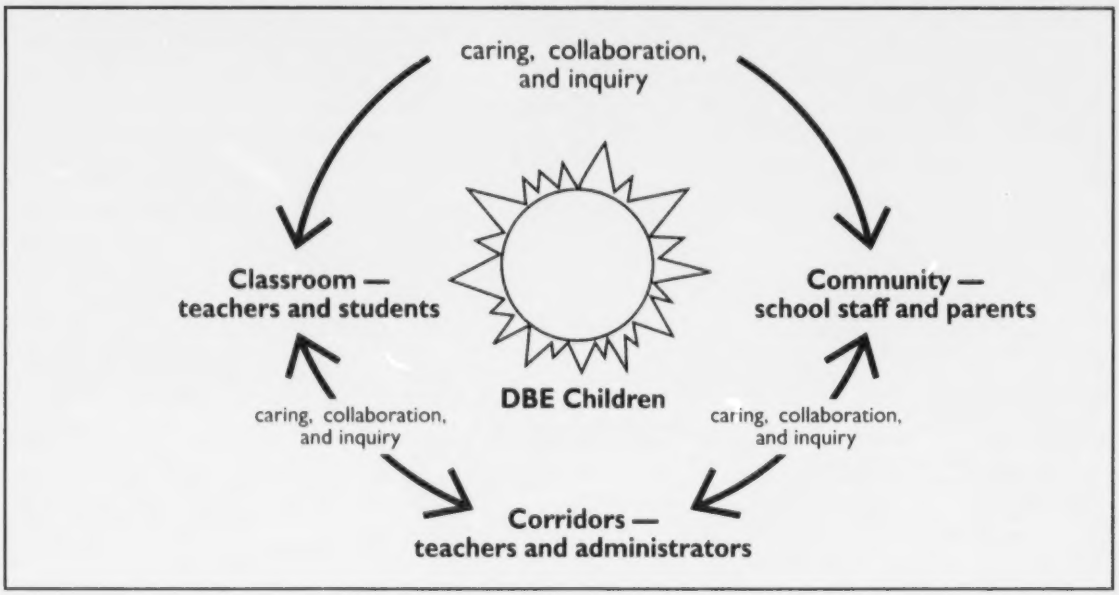
The timeline in Chapter One shows how the sequence of events between the late 1980s and the present supported and guided overall change. In particular, the six-year span of time between 1991 and 1996 witnessed a stretch from the first steps toward inclusion to the priority of shared decision making and, eventually, to consolidation that helped entrench SFA as a model of collaboration and shared decision making.

Membership in the DBE learning community extends beyond the teachers, staff, and administrators of the school. DBE parents are figuratively and literally in the classrooms and corridors. They are invited and encouraged to be present in the school and to assume an active role in the learning community. Figure 2 reflects this environment, showing the children of DBE surrounded by a nurturing team of adults focused on their social and cognitive well-being and intellectual growth.

In the corridors, we find the plans and strategies that have influenced the changes in the teachers' professional lives. In the classrooms, we find the outcome of the plans and strategies created in the corridors. The SFA model helped to focus and align roles of multiple stakeholders and elements in a productive way. These are two-way collaborative relationships among stakeholders that encourage a healthy exchange based on inquiry, as well as a general attitude of caring.

To understand how this cycle has evolved, we must explore examples from the infusion of technology, the focus on students and learning (SFA), professional development (SFA and others), and the sustaining forces behind these successes.

**Figure 2. The Nurturing Cycle of Development Within the DBE School Community**


caring, collaboration, and inquiry
Classroom — teachers and students
Community — school staff and parents
DBE Children
caring, collaboration, and inquiry
caring, collaboration, and inquiry
Corridors — teachers and administrators

## A Review of the Roots of Reform — Frustration with Student Performance

Several years ago, a sense of frustration set in among the teachers at the elementary school level. Teachers observed that students were not experiencing success or achieving at the same level as in previous years. This problem developed over the course of three to five years. Teachers and administrators began investigating causes for declining performance on norm-referenced tests, increased grade-level retention rates, and more referrals for multi-factored evaluations. They found that while some elements had remained constant, dramatic shifts had occurred in others. The faculty had experienced little turnover, and was highly experienced, and few curriculum or textbook changes had been implemented. Many felt that while they were working harder than before, they were not experiencing their previous levels of success. What had changed?

### Demographics

DBE is located in the southern Appalachian hills of Lawrence County, Ohio, where approximately 25% of families receive public assistance. The average family income is $20,000 and unemployment (10%) is significantly above the state average. Real estate values are low; the district ranks 607 out of 611 school districts in Ohio in per pupil wealth. Free and reduced lunch applications in the district have grown from approximately 40% to over 60%.

The recent loss of several thousand manufacturing jobs forced families to move in order to seek employment. Consequently, the school and community lost a strong resource. Remaining families accepted lower paying jobs and found it necessary for both parents to work. These two realities together caused a dramatic decline in parent involvement in the education process.

Many families relocating to the district came from West Virginia or Kentucky after seeing Ohio's better welfare benefits. Students from more deprived backgrounds were entering kindergarten developmentally behind. Research indicated that 66% of the entering kindergarten students scored below the national average on a nationally normed subtest of language development skills. In some years, over 80% of the kindergarten students qualified for Title I supplemental services.

## First Steps to Address the Circumstances

Once the faculty became cognizant of this critical demographic information and its likely relationship to student success, it became clear that new strategies were necessary for successful teaching and education. Staff began seeking research-based programs that would improve results. Significant activities included Total Quality Management training; training more Reading Recovery teachers; learning to use cooperative learning strategies and exploration of the Success for All model; distance learning and technology; and the drafting of a Continuous Improvement Plan. Given the low base funding, the district and the school were compelled to seek additional resources to support the new initiatives (see Appendix C). DBE has been highly successful and creative in finding financial support for innovation. "If it needs to be done, we will find a way to do it!"

## Leadership

DBE is a caring, warm, and friendly place. As one looks at the myriad school accomplishments in technology, in building bridges to the community, and in curricular improvements (see the following section), it becomes apparent that there is a strong internal motivation to help the children succeed. However, without consistent leadership, little comes of improvement efforts. Appreciation of where the administration comes from helps one understand where DBE is going and its underlying motivation to support and facilitate change for the better. This brief background piece is an important reminder that change at the school level cannot be sustained without administration's broader support. The following excerpt is from the superintendent at a focus group discussion:

### The Superintendent's Story

*It's important to me that I share this because it has an effect on my philosophy as an administrator. I'm going to talk about something that happened to me when I was a student. I was never considered a good student. Looking back I can understand why. I am glad that they didn't have ADD [Attention Deficit*

*Disorder] and ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder], and things like that, when I was in elementary school, because I'm sure I would have been labeled.*

*When I was in high school, I was in college preparatory classes simply because my parents insisted that I [plan to] go to college. One particular unit we were studying in algebra was giving all of the students problems in the practice test. . . . I looked at a classmate of mine and I said, "You know, I'm going to take this book home, and I'm going to learn this material, and I'm going to ace this test tomorrow." He laughed and thought I was kind of funny. I had never earned an A in that class; in fact, I had very few As in anything. But, I actually took the book home, and I actually studied, and I don't know how many hours. But the unit finally clicked together [in my mind] and I understood it! I was able to work out every book question, all the practice questions, and the homework assignments. So the next day we took the exam. . . . The teacher always passed the tests back in the order of the highest grade first and the lowest grade last. So we all knew how we stood in the class rank, immediately. I was fully anticipating getting mine rather early, and the [teacher] did the whole classroom roster and my paper hadn't been passed back yet!*

*I was somewhat surprised, because I felt comfortable that I had done well on that test. So, finally, mine is the last paper in the pile, and he calls me up to his desk in front of the class, and he said "Here's your test. You got a 100 on it. How did you cheat?" This was in front of the entire class. And I said, "I didn't cheat." He replied, "I don't believe it. You were the only one who got a 100 in this class. You sit down beside this desk, and you retake this test immediately." He gave me another set of problems that I had to complete while he was instructing the rest of the class. . . . I got an A on that test, as well.*

*I never saw anything close to an A again in that class. I was very embarrassed and humiliated and certainly wasn't motivated to do well after that. But that [memory] has always stuck with me. My philosophy since has always been that every kid is worthy, and kids can learn if we provide them with the appropriate resources and instructional materials and respect their learning style, because we all learn differently.*

The attitude and mindset described in the above closing statement is ubiquitous among DBE teachers, staff, and administrators. This is significant, since without active support from above, little significant change can occur in the classroom.

This commitment reaches to the personal and professional lives of the teachers — the keystone leaders at the classroom level. These teachers respect and care about their students. During a conversation with one teacher using the interview/data gathering model, Technique Two: The Experience of Change (Ainscow et al., 1995), the term "pressurized" was selected, a term that has a negative connotation (see Appendix B for instruments, etc.). In this instance, it was a symptom of commitment to do the job well. (Note also the use of the word "care.")

*I put "pressured" in the "often" category. I feel pressured often and also overwhelmed, frustrated, and worried. I think I would be remiss in my duty if I didn't feel those things. I think that any teacher worth her salt would feel some of those things . . . because if you don't worry and feel anxious occasionally, it may mean that you don't care as much as you should.*
–A teacher

## Technology in the Corridors and Classrooms

Three critical pieces that contributed to the technology bloom in Deering prior to consolidation were the Appalachian Distance Learning Project (1991), SchoolNet (1994), and SchoolNet Plus (1995). Through the stepwise process of consolidation, all elementary school children have benefited from what is now DBE.

### Appalachian Distance Learning Project

Appalachian Distance Learning Project (ADLP) was a critical moment in the corridors, because for the first time in the decade, teachers had to confront concerns about teaching technology and their own personal technophobias. Fortunately, since ADLP was a very focused project, the number of stakeholders was limited and served as an excellent beginning point. ADLP was an example of early collaboration with the university/business sector. It also provided an opportunity to connect with parents. Informational meetings were held for parents and community members to promote awareness of the project. Parents were generally supportive, with parents expressing apprehension about other teachers and preservice teachers working with their children, videotaping in the classroom, and exploration of nontraditional teaching strategies and textbooks that this project would employ. Time and success would resolve these issues.

By the third year of the ADLP (1994), the Deering principal began to receive parental requests for student placement into the ADLP classroom. This created a challenge, as the other third-grade classrooms were still operating as traditional classrooms without any technological advancements. Students were placed in the classroom using a random selection process, with equal numbers of at-risk and talented-and-gifted students assigned to the ADLP along with traditional third graders. The Deering administrator experienced pressure from parents to assign students, and the random selection process was employed to relieve this pressure by providing equal opportunity for all.

A series of noteworthy outcomes resulted. Students involved in the project were becoming much more inquisitive. Noted one observer, "All the students involved in the pilot project were more exploring, investigating, and applying in nature than those students that were not involved in the ADLP pro-

ject." Discipline referrals were significantly lower than in the other traditional third-grade control groups. Student absenteeism was lower in the ADLP room than in other third-grade classrooms. Heterogeneous grouping effectively removed student labels, such as challenged and gifted, because students had the opportunity to interact with others of differing abilities across a distance. The distance learning component became viewed as an equalizer of ability, income, and situations among students and helped move the elementary school closer to true inclusion. (This furthered the goals of inclusion, which began in 1993.) An added success was the connection of the elementary school with children from different cultures, since another site was an elementary school located in the more diverse community of Athens, Ohio. A member of the case study leadership team noted that, "Students began to realize State Route 243 was connected to other roads in the outside world."

From a classroom management perspective, all lesson planning was intense in the pre-planning stage. Teachers from the three ADLP schools had to collaborate on lesson plans across a distance and during on-line meetings held after the school. Some preservice students arranged weekend work days as well. Along with a substantial increase in pre-planning time, there was also collaboration among peers with each school that helped ensure high-quality interactive lessons. Timing was critical, since student materials needed for the lessons had to be requested from the other sites. The materials list had to be provided in a timely manner to guarantee that materials would be available to provide an engaged learning activity at all sites.

Teaching strategies such as inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning, center-based instruction, and integration of technology into hands-on activities were becoming a reality. The ADLP room at Deering became a model classroom to support the broader change initiatives promulgated throughout the district at the elementary school level. Peer review of lessons and mentoring among preservice and practicing teachers and student teacher supervisors began during the 1993-94 school year. Ohio University professors began doing preservice supervision over the distance learning network. They were able to view lessons during instruction from 90 miles away at the main Ohio University campus in Athens. In addition, the professors were able to provide immediate review of the lesson, citing facilitating behaviors and offering recommendations for improvement.

Parents requested that their children continue with the engaged learning and technology-rich experiences they had experienced at the third-grade level; however, the district was constrained by finances, which encouraged the district to join as a plaintiff in *DeRolph v. State of Ohio* (1991), challenging the state's per-pupil funding formula (Appendix C). The basis of the suit was that the existing formula did not promote an equitable and adequate education for all Ohio students. Participation in the Appalachian Distance Learning Project punctuated this problem, as the district began to see the need for technology availability in every classroom. All essential district decision makers were keenly aware of the possibilities available in educational opportunities for students via technology.

## SchoolNet

In the spring of 1994, the teachers, parents, and administration set about designing a more comprehensive plan for technology. The plan was developed through cooperation among the stakeholders and a Pioneering Partners Grant (sponsored by GTE). As an aside, put in perspective the number of factors coming into play at this general period: Venture Capital, Success for All, passing of a building levy, and imminence of consolidation. The complexity at this point was astounding (see discussion of tensions later in this case). In the midst of this rapid growth and opportunity for change, Governor Voinovich announced a new state initiative: SchoolNet. The SchoolNet initiative was created to wire every public school classroom kindergarten to grade 12 with voice, video and data capability. In addition, an equality component was implemented to place one interactive teacher workstation in classrooms kindergarten to grade 12 in the 153 low-wealth school districts in Ohio. The Dawson-Bryant School District qualified as a low-wealth district. Eventually the district became one of 14 school districts competitively selected as a participant in two prototype technology projects. Selected schools had to demonstrate leadership in teaching, learning and technological integration practices. The Appalachian Distance Learning Project was expanded into a Learning Community Link prototype project. The ADLP schools (Dawson-Bryant, Ironton City, and Athens City) were merged with the Columbus Educational Satellite Network along with the Center of Science and Industry, the Columbus Zoo, and the Ohio Historical Society.

Participation in this initiative provided over 100 hours of professional development for a team of kindergarten to grade 12 teachers to integrate technology into the curriculum. Deering Elementary had four teachers trained from the areas of regular education, special education, and art. Those teachers received laptops for completion of training. This project accelerated the vision of a technology-enhanced kindergarten-to-grade-12 curriculum into reality. The wiring and computers helped advance the district's technology plan timeline by at least five years. The training furthered the goals of collaboration and shared decision making (choices had to be made), and it supported the inquiry and cooperatively-based SFA program.

A Telecommunity Grant (from Ohio SchoolNet Telecommunity) opened videoconferencing capabilities to all classroom elementary school teachers and a grant was received from Ohio 2000 to provide needed staff development. SchoolNet wiring in classrooms and teachers workstations were set up in the 1995-96 school year. These efforts sparked a realization among teachers that technology was no longer an isolated luxury afforded to a small, third-grade classroom group of students, but rather that all elementary school classrooms would have access to the world outside.

## SchoolNet Plus and Overcoming Classroom-Level Obstacles

In 1995, the Ohio General Assembly passed legislation that provided for one interactive computer per every five students in grades kindergarten to four. The vision of SchoolNet Plus was to provide "another tool to help students understand and give them as many opportunities as possible to help students demonstrate their understanding of the concepts they are presented with." SchoolNet Plus allowed the building an opportunity to help level the playing field for kindergarten-to-fourth-grade students. Students were provided with workstations and educational software to enhance learning experiences.

At this point, the district had three projects for technology integration, and teacher enthusiasm was at an all-time high. Staff development fueled the enthusiasm, as professional development was initiated in order to prepare students for these projects.

A number of obstacles related to the deployment of technology still had to be overcome. The buildings began to be wired in the summer of 1995; however, asbestos was discovered in the walls. This was after the district had been certified asbestos-free. The necessary wiring needed to provide Internet and networking capability for teacher use was delayed, eventually until the summer of 1996, because of asbestos abatement.

Teachers were trained in electronic mail usage. Their peers, local Ohio University Southern Campus, Instructional Technology Services of Central Ohio, and education service center office offered the professional-development classes. E-mail was useful in many aspects of the new programs, such as placing Success for All reading material orders (for volunteers to complete, administrative contacts, etc.). The staff was receptive to using e-mail, but the lack of connectivity due to outside factors (such as asbestos) caused frustration among the staff. Enthusiasm was waning. Consequently, the building administrator and elementary school technology committee moved the one building Internet access to the staff workroom. Though limited to one machine, this served to alleviate some staff concerns and promoted continued expansion of communication.

Cabletron, a manufacturer of networking equipment with manufacturing facilities in Ironton, agreed to donate necessary networking hubs for the elementary school to network capability. Due to corporate delays in processing approval, network and Internet connectivity were not available for classroom use until fall 1997.

The most important lesson learned from this experience was that training needed to be completed immediately with hands-on access for staff. The staff-needs assessment in spring 1996 confirmed the district and building view that training should not be offered without accessibility. Although it took seven years to accomplish (1991-97), full access was finally realized.

## A Recent Development: Schools on the Move

In order to continue to expand teacher knowledge of integration in technology, a Schools on the Move Grant was obtained for the 1997-98 school year. The state recognized the need to develop a common framework that allowed teachers to share promising practices in integrating technology into a curriculum known as LessonLabs. LessonLabs addresses essential elements of teaching as defined by Ohio's teacher licensure program (Praxis and Pathwise). Classroom Management, Instructional Strategies, Concepts, Objectives, Assessment, and Tools and Resources are elements a teacher addresses in creating LessonLabs. LessonLabs can range in length from a day to a week, month, or year. The intent is to allow teachers across the state of Ohio to share work in a way that everyone understands. The third- and fourth-grade teachers were involved in developing LessonLabs during the 1997-98 school year. Those teachers will become mentors for second- and fifth-grade teachers during the 1998-99 school year. LessonLab development was supported internally by adjusting schedules to let teams work together more often. This alleviated an impending time-crunch tension.

## Strategies, Lessons, and Community Links

Establishing and then improving students' access to and use of technologies at DBE has been an eight-year undertaking. The activities required collaboration, multiple levels of training, significant capital investment, and collaboration among multiple stakeholders. General factors that contributed to its success were starting small (ADLP was a third-grade initiative), persistence in securing funding, and support from all administrative levels. Two other factors contributed to its success. The first was ongoing collaboration among teachers planning together (e.g., ADLP schools, and writing LessonLabs) and working with multiple agencies, businesses, and educational institutions. This is a good example of collaborative inquiry into resources, strategies, and support networks. The second significant factor was the creation of the community- and school-designed Technology Plan, which aligned with district goals promoting shared decision-making. All of the stakeholders were involved in planning, implementation, and choices. They became vested interests, strengthening commitment to support the change initiatives of the school.

## Barriers

Integrating technology into the mainstream of activities at the elementary school level in the Dawson-Bryant School District was no easy task. Some of the impediments and challenges to overcome included:

- *feeling of being overwhelmed*
- *difficulty dealing with a paradigm shift*
- *inability to reach consensus*
- *reluctance to change*
- *equitability*
- *purchasing decisions*

Since the ADLP was first among the technological-learning-environment-related changes, it became a model for broad-based institutionalization among the three existing elementary schools (this was pre-consolidation). The ADLP allowed the project students, teachers, and administrators to connect, communicate, and collaborate, not only among the Deering staff and students, but also among peers in other districts and colleagues at the Ohio University College of Education. The staff development, classroom resources, and university collaboration would eventually prove to be a "win-win" situation for all of the elementary schools. However, even beyond those listed above, there were other barriers.

One of the challenges in implementing widespread technological innovations was caution at the administrative level. The perceived risks hampered buy-in and the fear of the unknown was a problematic undercurrent, but these concerns did not stop progress. As policy-makers, the administrators in Andis, Monitor, and Deering learned to become more flexible in their building decisions regarding choices that would affect the schedules of other buildings. Compromises in classroom and building scheduling, curriculum, and purchasing decisions began to become more commonplace. The administrators were forced to examine their existing practices and building policies to allow for change and collaboration. The schools began to appreciate the value of sharing of needs and promising practices among the broader group of teachers regarding technological improvements reaching beyond the ADLP classroom at Deering.

There were other concerns at the teachers' level. All interested teachers were invited to participate in a dialogue with the dean and select faculty of the college of education at Ohio University to share priorities regarding responsibilities, staff-development strategies, and teacher-participant expectations and to discuss desired student outcomes. Eventually the district had three teachers, the superintendent, the curriculum director, and the building principals attend an overview in the spring of 1991. However, before this meeting, some veteran teachers expressed a sense of anxiety and fear and removed themselves from the job application process implemented by the district for the project for the ADLP classroom teacher. Though ADLP-related, this caused a ripple effect, exacerbating concern and caution among the Dawson-Bryant teachers in general regarding broader-based technological innovations at the elementary school level. In another instance, a new teacher was very optimistic about the professional growth offered through the ADLP, but expressed concern regarding accepting the teaching position due to lack of seniority within the district.

Most teachers in the district believed the ADLP was only a third-grade pilot project, and few anticipated that this initiative would significantly affect their day-to-day classroom instruction (or at least hoped that it would not). The collaborating administrators felt that the knowledge and experience gained through the project would serve as a stepping stone for other elementary school classrooms in the district and persisted. Eventually, the ADLP classroom became a model for teaching as well as technological innovation. Parental support for technology in all classrooms grew and pinpointed the challenge to high-quality education that funding limitations caused in the Dawson-Bryant School District.

## From the Corridors to the Classrooms: SFA

As introduced in the first chapter, Success for All was a significant catalyst in extending, refining, and sustaining change in the classroom. Venture Capital was used to support this schoolwide improvement program geared toward grades pre-kindergarten to five. Success for All is a facilitator-supported program that focuses on prevention and early intervention to ensure that every student will succeed in reading and writing, allowing no child to fall between the cracks. The curriculum utilized is driven by a cooperative learning model that requires students to collaborate in their reading and writing activities. More recently, elements of a complementary SFA-supported program, Roots and Wings (*Roots and Wings*, 1996), for reading, language, and writing has been institutionalized. Within this context, the school was selected as an implementation pilot site for SFA-developed WorldLab simulations for science and social studies, integrating reading, writing, mathematics, and fine arts within a social studies and/or science content area. DBE's role in these programs has reached beyond just implementation. Because of the rapid infusion and obvious success with the programs, DBE has become an SFA visitation site, as part of the larger collaborative efforts to share these programs with other schools locally, regionally, and nationally.

The idea of "success for all" signifies more broadly the underlying focus and commitment to student learning and welfare that has been a major source/force for change. SFA provided a multidimensional framework (e.g., focus on reading, continuous assessment, early identification, prevention, tutoring); a comprehensive model of the change; and carefully articulated resources in the form of curriculum and learning materials, inservice training, and networking to support its implementation. DBE has chosen carefully, drawing elements from various places to serve the needs of the students. Currently DBE is utilizing programs like the Saxon Mathematics and Process Phonics programs, along with the SFA programs. Modification and extension are common.

Some components of SFA were already being implemented in DBE, such as early identification, prevention; and tutoring through Reading Recovery. In fact, DBE earned special recognition by becoming a Reading Recovery training site. The SFA model was a good fit and served to expand on the established Reading Recovery with strategies for continuous assessment. Experimentation with cooperative learning was taking place through the prior association with the Appalachian Distance Learning Network. The SFA programs and inservice training extended cooperative learning schoolwide and across multiple subject areas. This developmental history serves as a good example at DBE of successful leveraging of programs, critical resources, and funding to enable more uniform schoolwide implementation.

## Professional Development: Changing Roles

### The Foundation

Although echoed in many places in this study, a specific discussion of (Dawson-Bryant School District's commitment to site-based decision making has not been clearly defined. A commitment made at the administrative level was a critical step toward refining the roles of the faculty and administrative staffs in the district. Some key elements (see also Table 1) are as follows:

1. *Administrative meetings are held at least on a monthly basis to obtain input from all building administrators. Joint decisions are made relative to policies, regulations, and daily school activities*
2. *There is a monthly Board Administrative Conference, involving administration, the board of education, and parents, to discuss important issues.*
3. *District-wide planning committees have representation of certified and noncertified staff, parents, community members, and board of education members.*
4. *Deering Elementary was chosen from the Pilasco-Ross Special Education Regional Resource Center area to have a team trained in collaboration. The training provided participants with the necessary skills to work together in providing a high-quality education for all students. The emphasis was on school-based decision making that comes from the group, not from the administration.*
5. *In 1992, the Dawson-Bryant School District began the restructuring process. The first step was a series of visits to sites with restructuring models already in operation. Restructuring strategies were researched and staff members received inservice training in:*
   - *Cooperative Learning*
   - *Collaboration*
   - *Total Quality Management*
   - *Inclusion*
   - *Thematic Teaching*
   - *Multi-Aged Grouping*
   - *Non-Graded Primary*
   - *Technology Training*
6. *Parents, teachers, and community members were invited to join in shared decision making as members, not proxies.*

This commitment and these early steps provided the foundation for future actions. The Deering self-study, completed in the fall of 1993, was an important product and punctuated the need for immediate attention to reading deficits. However, other factors were also recognized by the staff, including: scheduling additional time for instruction, building the parent-school connection, having individual tutoring by certificated staff and paraprofessionals, and volunteer support. The district sponsored a collaborative (teachers, administrators, and parents) inquiry into programs and models that work. Success for All was identified as the appropriate program to help meet students' learning needs and building/district reform goals.

The Deering staff visited a nearby SFA school, participated in an introductory inservice program conducted by an SFA representative, committed to a free (i.e., without stipend) three-day summer inservice program, and selected an in-house SFA facilitator.

Participation in the various collaborative initiatives, implementation of new classroom-based goals (i.e., inclusion), and learning to work within the milieu of the larger stakeholder community was not without pitfalls. A continual strand of inquiry helped the school navigate difficult seas. They decisively asked the following:

*Will this change meet the needs of our learning community?*

*Does the staff really have the commitment?*

*How can we heighten collaborative participation and buy-in?*

*Has this method been thoroughly researched?*

*Is the change too dependent upon a few key individuals?*

*Are we changing too rapidly?*

In the Venture Capital School Improvement application, the school district and Deering noted they "[would] enter into a contractual agreement with Johns Hopkins University for continual updating and in-servicing of the [Deering] staff" (Dawson-Bryant Venture Capital Committee, 1994, p. 8).

## Expanded Roles for Teachers

Prior to the various district-wide and building-specific steps to radically improve teaching, classrooms at the elementary school level looked very traditional. Teachers, administrators, and parents described classrooms as "transmissionist" environments. They were book-driven — teachers talked and students listened. One teacher described the typical setting as "sit down and open your book." An administrator equated many of the classrooms with those of the 1960s and 1970s, noting the more original reading activities might include round-robin reading. Classrooms and teachers were isolated, operating essentially independently. A fraction of teachers collaborated, but they were the exception, not the norm.

The setting began its rapid evolution when the district committed to the concept of collaboration. Teachers' roles were dramatically changed by adoption of SFA in 1993 and Venture Capital support in 1994. Teachers were now included in overall decisions. They developed and conducted needs assessments, and results were shared with the entire staff. Problems and successes became co-owned by all. The level of activities beyond just planning for and teaching every day expanded. All teachers now participated in an expanded series of reform-minded activities, such as:

- *Collaborative workshops*
- *Cooperative-learning techniques*
- *Intervention assistance team*
- *Success for All site visitations*
- *Multi-age grouping training*
- *Total Quality Management training*
- *Success for All introductory training sessions (i.e., three-day introductory session with continuing inservice training throughout the year*
- *Weekly building level team meetings*
- *Monthly inservice sessions chosen jointly by staff (outside of required SFA workshops)*
- *Partnership with outside agencies*
- *Multi-age grouping for reading and mathematics*
- *Novel and thematic units for reading*
- *Increased staff for reading instruction*
- *90-minute block schedule for reading/language arts*
- *Release time for monthly inservice program*
- *Head Start/Kindergarten expansion of program*

Deering invested approximately $5,000 in 1993-94 for initial SFA exploration. Costs ranged from $45,000 to $57,000 for the first full year; $17,000 to $21,000 the second year; and $11,000 to $14,000 (Success for All Program, 1994) the third year.

## The Teaching/Learning Environment at DBE

With the evolving teacher roles and professional-development activities as a background, what transpires in DBE classrooms? Have classrooms and the teacher-student roles changed from those roles previously described?

DBE children in SFA/Roots and Wings classrooms are busy. Although they may work alone, they often work together with a spirit of collaboration and cooperation at all grade levels. Students are encouraged to talk to each other about their work and to move around during many activities. One standing in the hall near an open classroom door will hear sounds of student engagement. The students and the teacher are active participants in learning. Conversations are two-way between teachers and student, as well as among students themselves. These students have a voice in their active learning environment; enthusiasm is ubiquitous. Looking from the outside in, the pace in the DBE classrooms is busy, but manageable. However, from the inside looking out, the pressures of external measures (e.g., state tests) and the volume of curricular changes being instituted at DBE make for a rapid pace for the teachers, who sometimes feel overwhelmed and frustrated. These feelings are no surprise; anyone who has taught has dealt with these feelings. In this setting, however, the pace of change is exceedingly rapid. The positive classroom atmosphere is testimony to the teachers' fortitude in dealing with these pressures without letting them spill over into the classroom. This is a very real measure of professionalism and commitment. Still, because DBE is so deeply involved in multiple elements of school improvement, this is a notable tension that will be explored further in Chapter Four.

## Reading

As a targeted limitation and central source of frustration among teachers, reading is a natural class to visit first. When a school becomes involved in SFA, it commits to the reading and writing program, cooperative learning, eight-week assessment cycles, and the development of a Family Support Team. There is also an immediate requirement for schedule restructuring. The first 90 minutes of every day is reading!

A typical day includes 20 minutes of listening comprehension. This might include storytelling-retelling for first graders and exploration of elements of literature (such as style or contrasting fiction and nonfiction) for older children. This is followed by 55 minutes of skills. In first grade, this might include reading strategies, phonics review, and vocabulary. In second through fifth grades, activities might involve Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition using a basal reading text or novel. The last 15 minutes of this block is a reading celebration for first graders with lots of room for students' and teachers' creativity (e.g., integrated with fine arts). In second through sixth grades, students may do book reports, which can be very creative, or additional skills activities. Assessments are completed every eight weeks using a variety of tools and instruments, some from SFA and others from varied sources. Children are rotated based on performance, assessment, and teachers' recommendations. One teacher noted that the children enjoy the variety but also appreciate the predictability of the daily 90-minute cycle. The entry below was taken from the researcher's field notes during skills.

### Field Notes

*In first grade today, during skill development, students had read a story and were drawing a picture based on some favorite element of the story or a personal experience which related to the story. It was a casual but focused event, with the children laboring hard over their products, which they also had to explain in writing. Many of the children were curious about the visitor and brought their works up to show and explain. Comprehension was good, as the children were able to relate their stories and pictures well to the story they had been reading as a group.*

It is significant to note that, although SFA is fully embraced, DBE has chosen to keep Reading Recovery as well. The reasons are practical and two-pronged. First, Reading Recovery works at DBE, and a number of the teachers are trained in Reading Recovery. Second, Reading Recovery fits the tutoring component of the SFA early intervention model for students having difficulty reading. Recently the SFA site facilitator was invited to conduct a workshop in Columbus on effectively integrating Reading Recovery with SFA. Also, Process Phonics has been retained and is integrated into the basic SFA reading and writing program.

## Mathematics

DBE does not use Roots and Wings mathematics. The choice was based on two related factors: (1) in 1994, the mathematics component was not yet developed in the Hopkins program; and (2) the rest of the district (middle and high school levels) were using Saxon Mathematics. However, when you look in on a classroom, what you may see is a hybrid of the two programs. In the setting below, the curricular structure was Saxon, but the teaching strategy reflected the cooperative-learning strategies of SFA and Roots and Wings.

### Field Notes

*"Sit down and open your book and turn to page seven" — it doesn't work any more!* – DBE teacher (discussing how teachers used to teach in the Dawson-Bryant School District)

*Teaching has changed at DBE over the last few years. Teachers credit SFA, their growing knowledge of alternative strategies, building restructuring (including consolidation), phonics, and even proficiencies as driving forces behind positive changes in teaching. A typical lesson in mathematics in a primary grade might last for 35 to 45 minutes. Mathematics, as in other classrooms at DBE, is highly interactive, fast paced, and modestly teacher-directed.*

*At 11:05 a.m., the children are timed during their response to a series of mathematics questions. They have one minute, and the teacher preps them: "One for the money, two for the show . . . now go, cat, go!" The children worked quickly and efficiently, and no one seemed intimidated by either the routine or the verbal class assessment in the end. One girl finished the 25 questions in about 40 seconds. Others labored intensely to work though 12 to 14 of the questions. In the end, among the 24 children in the class, three students finished all 25, and two completed only 12 of the questions. The results were immediately graded, and everyone verbally reported their score. No negative comments were heard from any of the children during this exercise. Anyone scoring below 14 had to take the test home to redo. This lesson was quiet and independently done.*

*By 11:15 a.m., we have moved to a series of questions related to counting. How many days have we been in school? How many days do we have to go? Children readily responded; in fact, some in their excitement, forgot to raise their hands first. Answers were offered, and the teacher repeated the correct answer back to the students once they had reached consensus or needed an additional prompt. This section of the lesson was primarily visual and auditory and cooperatively based, since the children could respond to and build on each other's ideas and speculations on the correct answer. During this time, the children also practiced doing estimations and subtraction and used money to make a total of 27 cents.*

*At 11:30 a.m,. everyone has a simple manipulative in hand: a cup of plastic beads that is to be measured. The volumetric tools used were practical measuring devices — kitchen measuring cups and spoons — which helped provide a frame of reference to which the children may easily relate. The teacher asked the question of the children, "what can we measure?" and then waited patiently. Working in cooperative pairs, they combined their beads and then counted them into a measuring device. This activity demonstrated a conscious scope and sequence, since it was a reinforcement of a more directed activity done three days before this observation. There was a certain amount of youthful silliness during the activity, but the student engagement rate at all times during this final activity was high.*

*This productive, but silly time at the end of class provides a window into the learning environment. This is a place where children can and do enjoy schooling and learning and also are able to still be children — a wonderful combination.*

## Social Studies

Generally, Dawson-Bryant Elementary follows the district science and social studies programs. As a pilot site for the SFA-sponsored WorldLab curriculum, however, faculty from different grade levels received training and implemented several WorldLab units during the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years. WorldLab presents curriculum in a meaningful context for investigation and experimentation. It promotes student learning by using simulations of real, engaging, and first-hand experiences. For example, the Encounters unit has students researching their own community history and compiling it as they

study their state and nation. The Rebellion simulation has students experience events similar to those that led up to the American Revolution.

The following is an abbreviated vignette of role-playing that involved the administration and the issue of taxation without representation. The teacher felt the children saw value in the experience and had a deeper understanding of this social studies topic through their first-hand experience. As a part of a study on taxation without representation, the children in a fifth-grade class found themselves in the middle of a simulation without realizing it. The experience is related in summary below by one of the teachers involved.

## A Teacher's Story

*A letter came from a woman who was interested in helping students. She heard that we were doing this WorldLab unit (a part of Roots and Wings). She decided to send all of the fifth-grade classes that were doing this unit $50 and they could spent it anywhere they want to. So we read that letter to them and set up a class council. One person was chosen from each group. The [children] used a variety of techniques to pick that person.*

*It was just by accident that we had an assembly the next day about a fundraiser, and that the pop machine had been broken and was giving out free sodas. So after all the other children had left the assembly we kept the fifth graders there. They were told that this pop was stolen and the school didn't have enough money to pay the bill and buy more WorldLab materials. So the principal had to ask each class to help pay for the stolen sodas (i.e., all the free ones). Since each class had been given $50, it would only be right that each class would give $25 back to the school. The students didn't like the idea, so the principal said that every time students sharpened their pencil in the classroom, they were to be charged a dollar.*

*When we came back up to my classroom, they were really mad. They said that they already paid an activities fee that is supposed to pay for materials. They thought an injustice was being done and they were upset. By now it was time to go home. The bus drivers told us that the kids were really riled up about it on the way home. The next morning things hadn't cooled off any.*

*So they decided they were going to march on the administrative offices and do a sit-in. This was something that we didn't anticipate. At first they were charged up, then the leaders got scared. Somebody started crying. They were scared and started to have second thoughts. Well, we (two fifth-grade teachers) bound them all together and they came up with a chant "one for all and all for one, we're not going to pay today, ha-ha." So we chanted that all the way down the hall. We got to the offices and the leaders announced that we're not going to move until something is done. And then one student went in and told the principal what we wanted and what we demanded — the taxes to be taken away because it was unfair. Eventually we were shooed out of the office, and the kids were told they would hear an answer in the afternoon.*

*After lunch, the administrators said that they would lift the $25 fee, but we would still have the tax on the pencil sharpener. They still didn't think that it was fair, but were told that more correspondence had to be in writing. Some of them made petitions and most of them were writing letters . . . Since there was a field trip the next day, we decided we needed to let them in on the drama.*

*After we told them, no one was angry anymore, but they sure had a lot to say and write about [that was] related to taxation without representation!*

## The Modified Schedule: An Unresolved Tension

Radical changes in the learning environment will always create unanticipated needs. One such need was defined during the 1996-97 school year. Teacher and administrative concerns about learning loss occurring over the summer break and the need for more time for redemption were voiced. Also, with the changing and expanding roles of teachers in DBE and the wide variety of activities, additional time was needed to complete the tasks necessary to get the job done. The superintendent, building administrators and teaching staff met, and a decision was made to investigate the possibility of a modified (year-round) school calendar.

An elementary school committee was formed with representation of parents, teachers and community members. The elementary school committee used the 1996-97 school year to research and plan a model modified calendar. At the April 1997 board of education meeting, this committee presented its findings and recommendation of implementing a modified calendar at DBE beginning the fall of 1997. The recommendation was a series of four 45-day cycles with six weeks off during the summer months. The justification was based on:

- *Learning loss over the summer that resulted in the necessity for extensive review sessions in the fall*
- *Intersession weeks increase student-teacher contact time for both remediation and enrichment*
- *Time out of school between grading periods, renewing staff and student energies for teaching and !earning*
- *Through intersessions, community connections would be strengthened. All intersessions would be coordinated with and offered by community, service agency, and higher education people. The goals of intersession would be to help children have engaging experiences outside of core subject areas. (Examples of actual intersession activities: Veterans of WWII and other wars shared historical stories and experiences with fourth and fifth graders; a parent taught fishing skills.)*
- *Allows families to enjoy a wider variety of vacation experiences*

The board of education accepted the elementary school committee recommendation with the provision that the modified calendar be offered to one-half of the building students and staff. The modified-calendar elementary school program would operate as a school within a school. The board of education further directed the building to track results of both calendars as to attendance rate, test results, staff attendance, and parental involvement.

A new district committee was formed at this point (spring of 1996) to monitor progress and offer a recommendation at the conclusion of the 1997-98 school year. The district committee was directed to make a recommendation regarding the use of a modified calendar for kindergarten to grade 12, not simply at the elementary school level. The committee presented its findings at staff, community, and board of education meetings in the spring of 1998. Findings included the following: modified-calendar students showed minimal gains on test scores; absenteeism was remarkably lower for students and staff; attitudes of both students and staff on the modified schedule were positive; and discipline referrals were down for students on the modified calendar, as well.

The superintendent presented the district committee's recommendation to the board, adding that he supported the modified schedule. The recommendation was to implement a modified calendar kindergarten to grade eight for the 1998-99 school year. Vocal opposition to the recommendation, which was generally known prior to the board meeting, came from teachers at the middle school and some noncertified staff members who felt the modified schedule would not work and would disrupt family schedules (kindergarten to grade eight versus high-school-aged children). The outcome was that the board of education voted three to two not to continue the modified calendar. The rationale for the vote was that the schedule caused splits in family schedules. DBE returned exclusively to the traditional nine-month calendar in the fall of 1998.

Perry (1991), writing about the challenges of educational reform, stressed the difficulty of overcoming tradition in order to affect change. She asserted that regardless of how logical or desirable a change might be, "the educational climate will likely persist with the force of habit rather than the force of logic in any conflict between logic and tradition, tradition generally wins" (p. 15).

The outcome and board vote is one of the few events in DBE recent history that has remained unresolved, with tensions along the line of pro and con not having yet cooled. Certain committee members and DBE staff felt betrayed by the last-minute, successful move by a group opposed to a schedule for personal reasons — a direct contrast, it would seem, to the DBE philosophy of designing programs and marshaling resources in the children's best interests. The dilemma of needing more time in the school day or more days in the school year is a problem yet to be solved.

## How the Stakeholders View the Changes

The curricular changes began in the corridors and came to fruition in the classrooms. However, the views of two key stakeholder groups are important, as they provide further understanding of the outcomes seen in the classroom. The personal comments of the teachers also provide insight into changes in their own professional roles, their level of buy-in, and associated tensions. Both parents and teachers shared insights and consistent viewpoints about the changes in effect at DBE. This underscores the positive interactions of the adults, the results of collaborative inquiry, and the ultimate implementation of reform-based events within the classroom.

### Teachers' Views

Interviews were conducted, as were class visitations, with multiple informal discussions with teachers in classrooms and the DBE hallways. Common themes that emerged included a perceived positive outlook, enthusiasm, flexibility and, for some, the uneasy feeling of being on a train running at full throttle (though there is a respected and trusted engineering crew driving). The strategies of change outlined by Ainscow, Hargreaves, and Hopkins were employed as a tool to explore the views of the teachers embroiled in dramatic school change. The Experience of Change tool (Ainscow et al., 1995), was employed to gather information about feelings of five teachers regarding changes in DBE.

This semistructured technique utilizes a series of adjectives ranging from very positive to very negative (e.g., enthusiastic to angry) as a beginning for conversation. The participating teachers taught in a range of grades including kindergarten, first, second, fourth, and fifth, and all members asked to participate accepted. Five additional teachers were interviewed using a series of more open-ended questions. Except where specifically noted, comments and quotes are drawn from all of these interviews, both open-ended and semistructured. A frequency count is used in Table 4 to profile the responses of the five teachers and show evidence of emergent patterns. Recommended by Ainscow, Hargreaves, and Hopkins (1995), only words placed in the often category are included in this count.

**Table 4**

**Frequency Count of Words Used by Teachers to Describe their View of DBE Curricular Changes, Such as Success for All, Roots and Wings, and Saxon Mathematics (N=5)**

| *Category* | *Total Number of Responses (Frequency Count)* |
|---|---|
| ++ very positive words | 30 out of a possible* 40 |
| + positive words | 17 out of a possible* 20 |
| - negative words | 1 out of a possible* 20 |
| --very negative words | 3 out of a possible* 32 |

**Out of a possible* refers to the total number of words in this category multiplied by number of teachers interviewed (e.g., for *very positive* there are 8 positive words and 5 teachers, therefore 8 words x 5 teachers = 40 responses).

As noted among the parents' responses in Table 3, when exploring the view from the front porch, consistency of the results among teachers was noteworthy and nearly as positive overall. These teachers, according to one person, considered themselves to be often committed, enthusiastic, and interested. However, some negative words were selected by one individual who felt often worried, anxious, frustrated, and pressured (the *three out of a possible 32* in Table 4 above). These teachers have a professional and committed attitude to success at DBE. "I'm very committed to doing a good job and using the curriculum that our district has provided, and I'm doing the best I can to teach these children . . . to get them ready for the world" (DBE teacher).

Having spent many days in the corridors and classrooms of DBE, the university team noted repeatedly the commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers through accolades from parents, community members, and administrative staff.

## Flexibility, Enthusiasm, and Dealing With the Challenge of Change

*I'm enthusiastic . . . because I'm a person who likes change.* – DBE teacher

The teachers feel they have a voice in matters of curriculum, but they also perceive the rapid implementation of new curriculum elements as a daunting challenge. It is critical to note that though the volume of changes are viewed through a veil of frustration, in general, they are seen in a very positive light by the teachers. An early elementary school teacher, who is allowed more discretion in the amount of science to include relative to those teachers in the upper elementary school, comments:

> *In reading I [am] able to take the student where they can succeed — wherever that may be. A child might be a few grade levels behind, [but] they are learning and I think that*

*it builds up their self-esteem and they can improve and will actually [catch] up to their class someday. We take care of [science] through thematic units. Johns Hopkins has provided that for us. We've always done thematic units, but we had to rely on ourselves to gather all the information, and now we have a nice thick book and there are several topics and — there is just more there than any one teacher can use — so you can draw from it. You can spend one day on it [or] you can spend three weeks on it. The material is there and it's up to you.* – A teacher

Other teachers contrast the difference between the previous state and the current state in curricular matters, noting the positive results experienced within and across grade levels.

*Well, the children never got to express their ideas like they do now. I mean, we just read the book . . . that was our thing. We had to do it, so we read around and did the workbook, and that was our reading for the day. Now they have to answer questions they have to think, they have to write, they do journals. There's just so much more. And there's phonics now; [before] we were missing the phonics or [at least there were] not enough phonics.* – A teacher

*I think really that they learn more if you do these kinds of activities [cooperative learning and hands-on science] with them. . . . Just read it, answer the questions, read it, answer the questions — it's the way I did [it before as a teacher and when] I was back in school that was the way we did it.* – A teacher

*Now they have us talking about background knowledge — you know, prior knowledge. I think what you do [next] depends on that.* – A teacher

*The children are coming in [to my class at the beginning of the year] with a better foundation.* – A teacher

When talking about their progress in embracing the curricular reforms, teachers described them from a technical and instrumental position (e.g., what they do and what materials they use). Their language tends to be light in reference to the knowledge base on learning and how that justifies the curriculum and influences their strategic pedagogical choices. However, it is very clear that they are confident and competent in the delivery of the agreed-upon curricular choices.

The teachers spoke from the perspective of users, with limited amounts of reflection and references to their own learning, theory-based background. This technical-instrumentalist approach was reflected in the day-to-day teaching activities as well. These teachers are tuned to their students and very capable at delivery of the curricula. Newer teachers are less certain about appropriate latitudes for adaptation — often the next step in the natural succession in individual and collective curricular reform (Anderson et al., 1994; Burry-Stock, Yager, & Varrella, 1996). The next evolutionary step will come with time, confidence, and further understanding of learning theory behind the design.

## Parents' Views

> *I have nieces and nephews who go to different schools [in the region]. You know, those districts aren't as committed. I think that Dawson-Bryant gives 110%.* – A parent

### *Opportunities to Grow*

The parents at DBE are enthusiastic about their children's experiences. Over the course of the study, we met and talked informally through interviews or in focus groups with approximately 25 parents of DBE children. These parents ranged from community members to school volunteers, teachers who were parents of DBE children, and PTO leaders. Their children were representative of the diversity of the DBE student population as well. Some of the most enthusiastic community members were parents of exceptional children on both ends of the continuum.

> *All these children are going to have the same equal opportunity to excel.* – A parent

> *See, I have a [learning disabled] student too, and I think that's the one [who will] graduate, and I've been there too. . . . A lot of kids have the opportunity to excel in the areas that they can excel in and get help with the areas that they can't. I think that's, you know, an advantage to this system.* – A parent

> *My daughter got the President's Award, which is really [exciting for her], so it's really changed here. They focus more on the learning ability of the children and how far they can go, instead of how far they can throw a football.* – A parent

From the parents' perspective, the strengths of DBE include sensitivity to varied students' needs and individual attention and instruction. Reading is a priority for DBE parents too; they are knowledgeable about programs, and materials, and they share authentic examples of improvements and successes in their homes and their children's lives, academically, behaviorally, and socially.

> *I think the reading program is probably the most impressive thing we have . . . I have to sit down with my child for 20 minutes a night [part of the structure of the SFA in place at DBE]. But that 20 minutes a night is quality time . . . that you have with your child. It's memories, it's memories that 20 years from now our children are going to look back on and say, "They cared enough about me to sit down and read to me." Or in my case, she reads to me — I don't have to read to her any longer.* – A parent

> *I have seen over the years that my daughter has branched out. She's not in any cliques. . . . She's excelling in academics; and because of that, personally, she has just really blossomed. I have to credit the school for a lot of that . . . I'm kind of shy, but school has really helped her. . . . And then on the other end, I have a son who's in kindergarten and he was not bad, but he was kind of uncontrollable at times for me. . . . The kindergarten teachers have been*

*so great about helping him academically to where he's doing the very best that he can, and they work with me. They let me now what's going on so that I can help with his discipline. I really appreciate that. They don't make him feel like he's a bad person. They just work with his personality, and I think they do that for each child. And I really admire that.* – A parent

The parents appreciate the support mechanisms, which are rooted in the multifaceted improvements stemming from the target areas of technology, community, and the SFA/Roots and Wings model. They recognize the collaborative activities of the teachers, appreciate access to information (e.g., homework hotline), and also note the respectful and caring environment of DBE that is reflected in their children's behavior. The following statements illustrate the subtle, but definite, indication of parent ownership in the school.

*Today, as I was walking down the hall — I don't even remember the child's name, but he remembered my name, because I try to volunteer as a parent. And he said, "Hello, Mrs. X." I thought that was wonderful. Children don't act that way in other places.* – A parent

*The respect that the children have . . . I think that not only are* we *[author's emphasis] teaching them academically; but also more on a personal level they seem to be achieving. They seem to be more alert to people's feelings: they are all-around better children, you know. . . . They are better members of the community.* – A parent

*The teachers work so well together as a unit. I think that is why our children are doing so well.* – A parent

*You ask [your child] to see their homework, and they say, "I don't have any." All you have to do is call the school . . . [the teachers] have their own number, and they will tell you what your kid's homework is.* – A parent

*You have voice mail if you need to let the teacher know something and you can't get a hold of her at the time.* – A parent

*Several times this year, my son's kindergarten teacher has called me. You know, right during the class [all classrooms have telephones with direct-dial lines], she has been able to let me know something that happened.* – A parent

***Caring as a Background***

These latter statements further support the contention that DBE is a caring school. This is triangulated by the attitude and actions of the teachers, the philosophy of the district and school administrators, and, now, by the views of the parents. True caring in school is about more than just paying attention to each student in class. Caring is about the kind of teaching that one sees in the DBE classrooms: The teachers listen to what their students have to say, because they care about what each student has to say for both personal and pedagogical reasons. The anxiety that the teachers expressed in trying to

keep up with the rate of curricular institutionalization is another form of caring: caring to do the very best for each and every child — to be worth their salt. The hours and days that the administrative and teacher leadership team has invested in seeking and winning grant monies is a form of caring. Caring is also evident through the close contact teachers maintain with parents through the homework hotline, telephone calls home, and e-mail, and through the open-door policy that the school promotes for all community members.

Every teacher cares about children. However, the commitment seen among the DBE faculty (and parents) goes beyond caring just for children, to caring about the entire school. This drives them to work consistently above and beyond contractual expectations. When considering the magnitude of curricular changes, the continual requirements for implementing the next curricular element or technological initiative, one observer noted that "they [teachers] just don't stop going!" What does keep them going? The teachers feel they are treated with respect, as professionals. This is an outgrowth of the nearly decade-long commitment to collaboration and shared decision making. It is also a reflection of that philosophy of the extended hand discussed earlier. Teachers are encouraged to present at regional and national conferences. Schedules are rearranged for work needs (e.g., LessonLabs). A handshake is a two-way communication. Interactions between the DBE leadership team and teachers is a two-way relationship, as well, evidenced best through mutual support and a shared commitment to the children.

The parents are positive about the growth at DBE. Two parents summed up the changes in the school which began in the corridors and are being refined in the classroom, the corridors, and the community — that upward spiral described above.

> *I'm satisfied. That's my big one. I'm satisfied that our school is doing everything possible it can to promote our children and to give them the best education that they can.* – A parent

> *I think our future if optimistic. Our children are not going to have to worry about the $5/hour jobs, because they are going to have the education to get out. And they'll go beyond that in our area.* – A parent

## Inquiry: The Strategy for Improvement

DBE change was fundamentally rooted in perceived problem(s) in student performance. It was the starting point for change and the integrating point for all changes that followed. The implications are manifold. For example, the selection of the SFA model for school change occurred as a result of local school personnel investigating the variety of school change models suggested in the Venture Capital application materials (first identified by the Deering staff in 1993). The school district and community

picked the one that provided the best fit with their identified needs (i.e., improvement in reading performance, greater consistency in reading programs across classrooms and grades, and stronger community ties) and the existing improvement efforts at the time — one that had a solid research base.

One clear message from current research is that when change is motivated by and addressed collaboratively using a problem-solving orientation and in response to locally identified needs, the prospects for successful implementation and continuation of projects is high (Anderson et al., 1994; Coburn, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1993; Fullan, 1996; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994). This is in contrast to schools or school districts that embark on changes more from an opportunistic standpoint or to solve bureaucratic problems (e.g., comply with state or federal policies). This latter approach of choosing symbols over substance is likely just a superficial reshuffling of the same existing element and is more often destined to failure or, at the very least, becomes nothing more than a new version of the existing setting (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Raywid, 1990).

The stage was set from the beginning for potential success at DBE. Schools sometimes successfully implement new programs, ideas, and strategies, yet the innovations do not or only marginally solve the problems they were intended to solve. The likelihood that the innovations adopted are effective in resolving those problems is also not just a matter of implementation, but one of getting them into practice institutionalized. Not surprisingly, high quality (i.e., known to achieve claimed results), user friendly (i.e., practical from user standpoint), and well-supported (training, resources, administrative support) innovations that fit local needs and contextual conditions stand a better chance of satisfying the needs they are intended to address. This is the case at DBE.

This has been done through an ongoing inquiry problem-solving approach that is product-oriented (i.e., student achievement) and goal-driven. In the mid-1970s, Karen S. Louis did a study of a federal program called the Research and Development Utilization Project. In this project, participating school districts/schools were expected to use rational problem-solving models to identify needs and select solutions for those needs. One of the interesting findings was that in those situations where local school personnel actually undertook a needs assessment process and followed up by actually reviewing and selecting from a variety of possible solutions relative to those needs, the programs they chose to implement were more likely to be successfully put into practice, to yield results as intended, and to be continued beyond the initial funding (Anderson, 1998).

The farsighted commitment by the central administration to emphasize collaboration and shared decision making in the early 1990s was the beginning. The resulting gathering of vision and resources was driven by (among other elements) consolidation and early successes in securing external competitive funding. This set of events changed the structures and roles of the teachers' lives profoundly. The current community habit of mind and practice of searching for ways to support overall goals and address documented needs (e.g., self-study completed as part of the Venture Capital application process) has kept DBE in a proactive position. DBE can continually make efficient and informed choices about how

and what should be done to improve the learning opportunities for all of the children. This developmental story is a spiral from the community and corridors to the classrooms, to the corridors, and again to the classrooms. The improvements in the DBE learning environment have been based on continual inquiry and have succeeded through collaboration of all stakeholders who are committed to whatever it takes, for the sake of the children.

Chapter Four

# Dawson-Bryant As a Learning Community: Together We Grow

Michael Fullan (1994; 1996) and Peter Senge (1990) point out that we must accept the nonlinear nature of change and learn to work effectively in a sometimes disturbing, but consistently dynamic environment. Fullan (1996) suggests that we "avoid becoming preoccupied with orchestrating the coherence of the system" (p. 421), noting that what looks clear on the surface may indeed be very murky down deep. He then recommends that we be mindful of the ways successful change does occur, rather than becoming overly preoccupied with precisely how it should occur. One recommendation offered is that "only when greater clarity and coherence are achieved in the minds of the majority of teachers, will we have any chance of success" (p. 421). When a system, small or large, finds itself in this position, it can be what Senge calls a learning organization. For Dawson-Bryant Elementary, the natural synonym is learning community.

DBE has not broken the mold in terms of what schools are or can be. However, it is certainly a vastly different place of work, learning, and service from what it was previously. This makes it an infinitely more believable and better model, an example of what a school can become with collaborative planning, tenacity, flexibility, and follow-through.

Dawson-Bryant Elementary (and Deering, Andis, and Monitor before) has been working diligently at change for a decade. It was modest and loosely designed at first, but DBE has grown in structure, capacity, and commitment. The case resesarchers have been in the homes of the children and in their classrooms, have examined everything from technology to curricular implementation and have considered the changing and growing roles of teachers and the guiding philosophy that has grown from those original tentative steps.

This chapter will reframe select key elements. In some places we will briefly retell elements of the original story-based discussions from previous chapters. Some challenges and tensions have been explored in the context of prior chapters (e.g., working with parents and agencies); others will be explored here. A wider lens will be used to frame the closing discussion on general lessons learned and

significant outcomes as shared by the DBE leadership team. We will end with one final examination of DBE as a learning community using the frame of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*.

## Initiating Schoolwide Change

School change is often compartmentalized to certain grade levels, tracks, teachers, and subject areas. At DBE, the majority of changes in curriculum and instruction undertaken have been schoolwide, with implications for all teachers and classrooms. At DBE, the story of change in school-community linkages is as prominent as change in the classroom. Change in adult interactions in the corridors also figures into the story, though less a deliberate focus than a result of the district-wide shift in leadership and decision-making processes. This shift has been a lengthy process occurring over the last eight to nine years (see the timeline, Table 1). The direction has always been deliberate and the actions predetermined, though many of the exploited opportunities have been serendipitous in that they were not specifically anticipated, although they were used prudently.

The Success for All program was a great fit, since many of the activities and initiatives already underway in DBE aligned with SFA goals and scale-up plans. The technology implementation represents an independent strand of change, parallel to the SFA-supported changes, though technology has enhanced the SFA/Roots and Wings effectiveness at the classroom level. SFA, unlike other school networks (Coalition of Essential Schools, Accelerated Schools), does not prescribe a governance or decision-making structure, so DBE's independently created, shared decision-making structure (1991-96) was an excellent match. The shift over the last decade to greater teacher (and parent) participation in school and district decision making is congruent with — but reaches beyond — the SFA model. A good example lies in the creation of the parent liaison position. The school has had a string of external partnerships and grants, beyond Venture Capital and the Johns Hopkins connection. The leveraging and integration of these multiple sources of resources and assistance play a critical role in keeping the reform going on multiple fronts! It is also a key source of tension — that is, of keeping up with the myriad activities occurring at any given time at DBE.

Venture Capital is a good example of a serendipitous opportunity that came after the initial shared vision and direction had been defined. Venture Capital was a critical resource marshaled by the school to support the changes it had chosen to undertake for improved student learning and general welfare. It opened the door for the SFA connection.

## The Culture of the School: The Shared Vision

Through this case we have discussed the role of collaboration from the boardroom to the classrooms. This kind of philosophical commitment influences and is influenced by school culture.

Interpretation of changing school culture and long-term goals has value for our final discussion on DBE as a learning community, especially by capturing that perspective from the inside.

Once again, the techniques of mapping school change were employed, this time using a board game called The Culture of the School (Ainscow et al., 1994). In this game, an eight-by-eight grid (64 squares) was used as the game board. Each corner is a different color and represents a pole in a described school culture. The four poles are as follows:

***Collaborative (Yellow)***

*Ours is a really friendly school, and we believe in people getting along, whether it's staff with staff, teachers with pupils, or the kids among themselves. Nobody gives of their best unless they feel valued and wanted — so that's where our educational philosophy begins. Social development is as important as academic development, and what doesn't get noticed in formal assessment we hope is noted through our social skills work, by other informal assessments, and in pupils' records of achievement. Of course, some pupils have lots of problems at home, and though we obviously can't solve all of those problems, we can't just ignore them either. It's a caring school, and the staff is cared about, as well as the kids.*

***Hothouse (Green)***

*Our philosophy is to educate the whole child, not just the bits that fit schools. Of course, we accept the state tests matter, and there's quite a bit of pressure on pupils to do their best. But we also believe that the social and emotional side of youngsters needs to be developed, and every teacher is involved in this kind of student support, as well as the academic side of teaching. You could describe relationships as close — we're a tightly knit staff, and that spills over to the pupils too. Team spirit is part of the ethos and there's not much room for loners. You have to give one hundred per cent here: teaching is emotionally as well as intellectually draining, so we all need the holidays to recharge ourselves for the next term.*

***Survivalist (Blue)***

*It's no soft option being a teacher here. It's OK if you're a strong sort of person with lots of self-confidence. If you're not, well, it can be hard controlling the kids and getting any work out of some classes. I can't say I'm really happy about the direction the school's taking, and morale in the staff room isn't what it might be. I get by, and generally keep myself to myself. After all, teaching's just a job, and you have to have your own private life, as well. I don't think the place gets the best out of me and, to be honest, if the school were inspected tomorrow and they saw us as we really are, we'd get a bad report. The trouble is I don't really think there's much chance of any major improvement for staff or kids without a very radical shakeup.*

***Formal (Pink)***

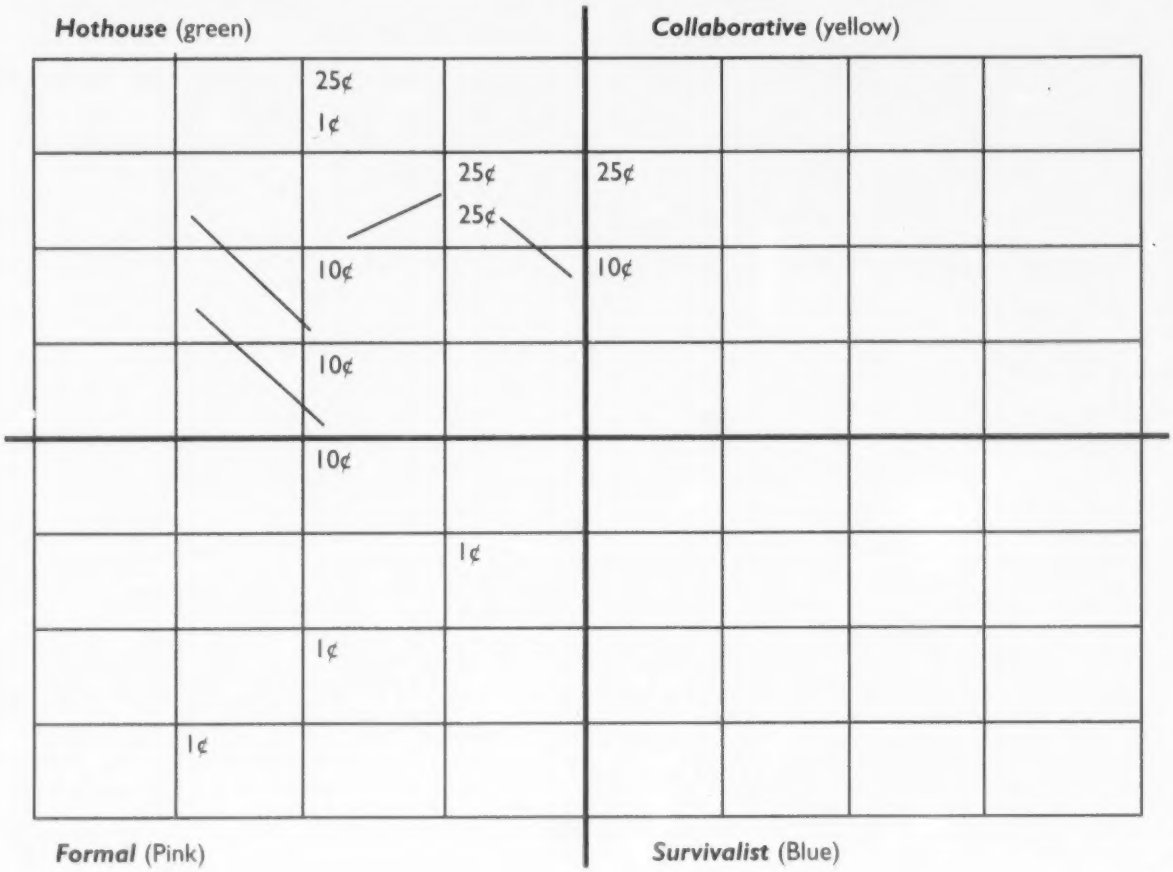
> *We regard ourselves as a well-disciplined sort of school, one that sets store on traditional values. The head runs the place as something of a "tight ship" with high expectations of us teachers. There's a strong emphasis on pupil learning, and we're expected to do well in our assessment and testing, and everybody's very proud when we do. We also like to do well in sports and physical education, which is another important aspect of achievement. We expect pupils to be fairly independent and not be mollycoddled. We're clear what the school stands for and what we're about, so we are naturally rather suspicious of trendy ideas, and put more trust in what's been shown to work best through past experience.*

Players each have a personal grid and four colored cards with detailed descriptions for each pole (situated at the corners). The players make three marks on their personal board, including where the school is now in this metaphor to map culture, where they think it should be (i.e., their ideal), and then an arrow noting where they believe the school is going.

At DBE, the staff was organized into four teams to complete The Culture of the School exercise. One team consisted of administrators and teachers in leadership positions. The other three were composed of classroom teachers. Once they completed their individual boards, the players created one joint view on a separate game board. The teams were given a quarter (25¢) to represent their cultural goal for DBE, a dime (10¢) to represent the current DBE culture, and a penny (1¢) to represent the cultural place they started when DBE first consolidated in 1996. A sharpened pencil was used to represent the direction in which the school was moving (which may, but does not need to be in the direction of the ideal of the group — represented by the quarter). A composite view from the four teams is represented in Figure 3.

There is some disparity defining the beginning (one group put their 1¢ in the general area of hothouse); this might be expected, since DBE is three former schools in one. However, there is remarkable consistency among the four independent groups' views of the existing culture (10¢) and the shared vision of the culture they would like to establish in the future (25¢). The direction of change is also significant. Two of the arrows are pointing toward hothouse, corroborating the opinion of many of the teachers that the pressure is rising (i.e., pressurized). Two of the other arrows point more toward the compromise position of a meld of the hothouse and collaborative cultures, indicating a belief that DBE is on the path to the ideal signified by the placing of the quarter (25¢). It should be noted that the administrative/teacher leadership team represents one of these four closely aligned groups. The consistency between the vision of the leadership team and the teachers, in general, is important. This validates their faith in leadership and, most importantly, indicates a likeness of mind that can be found only when vision, goals and philosophies align comfortably among colleagues.

**Figure 3. Consensus Views on the Culture of Dawson-Bryant Elementary Teams(N=4), Including a Total of 20 Individual Teachers and Administrators**




**Key**

25¢ = choice of where the group would like to be, culturally

10¢ = choice of where the group felt DBE was in May of 1998, culturally

1¢ = where we used to be, culturally (remember, these teachers while all now at DBE came from very different schools prior to consolidation — which may cloud even the group's consensus view of culture)

\ = the direction the school is moving culturally

When one considers the strategic position of where each group would like to go, that is, where they placed their two bits (25¢), DBE knows where it wants to go (and seems to be going — see later discussion). Using the descriptions above, that place is a school that melds a caring and nurturing school spirit with that of a hard-working, closely knit family which is goal-focused, working from shared norms and a sense of commitment to the school (community). This represents a meld of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* (i.e., a learning community striving to capture the best of societal and community norms; more on this later).

## Commitment and Control

The same group of teachers and school leaders also shared personal views on commitment and control of school- and community-initiated changes. This strategy was also drawn from the strategies for mapping the process of change presented by Ainscow, Hargreaves, and Hopkins (1995). Commitment and control are two pivot points that are seldom discussed in school change, yet are critical to building effective learning communities (Astuto et al., 1994; Fullan, 1994; Kruse et al., 1994; Sergiovanni, 1994). Here we again glimpse the bigger picture, from the position of the internal stakeholders: the teachers, teacher-leaders, and administrator. This is also a second look at issues of control that first surfaced in the study through interviews with teachers regarding curricular issues.

The teachers were given two sets of five statements (one geared toward control and another toward commitment), each printed on single sheets with statements in random order reflecting the full range of opinions (e.g., no commitment/high commitment). The teachers and administrators marked the one statement that most closely reflected their views. Also included at the bottom of the list of five statements was a box in which to add any personal views (Ainscow et al., 1995). Over 50% (11 of 19 completed responses) of the teachers chose to add their own view, as well as select a statement that was closest to their way of thinking.

The data were gathered with groups of three to six teachers and/or administrative staff. The small groups were composed of teachers from all grade levels and years of experience in teaching, ranging from four to more than 25 years. In summary, it was apparent that the commitment to change among all but one of these individuals was very high (N=19). Feelings of control, which could be equated with ownership, were not quite as high, again with the exception of one individual who was obviously dissatisfied with the changes and reforms in progress at DBE. One incomplete response was very positive, as well, judging by the comments. That individual rated himself/herself a five on commitment and, though s/he did not select a category for control, noted:

> *Of course things are changing. They always are. From one-room schools [this was a senior teacher] to large consolidated schools to [students] changing classes [versus self-contained classrooms] to technology. The administration needs to listen to parents and teachers for feedback to know how to modify and adapt.* – A teacher

Overall, views on commitment and control were very positive. However, using the scoring system, commitment was ranked higher that control (Table 5). Looking at the commitment (*x* axis), 13 of the 19 respondents noted their commitment to change at DBE was very high (chose the level 5 statement). Control (*y* axis) was also high, but not embraced quite as enthusiastically, with only seven of the 19 respondents choosing a level 5 statement. Regarding issues of control, some teachers (N=5) chose only to indicate that they felt a modest level of control, choosing the level 3 statement .

It is important for the reader to recognize that by these measures, as the instrumentation was designed by Ainscow et al., (1994), the responses indicate a very positive perspective on the part of these 19 DBE educators. As designed and used here, these results reflect the sense of community that exists and the general esprit de corps that remains among the majority of staff of DBE. It also indicates the successful expansion of the teachers' roles in the DBE community.

**Table 5. Transforming the Learning Community Study 1997-98. The Initiation of Change: Summary of Dawson-Bryant Elementary Teaching and Administrative Staff Responses to School-Initiated Changes (N=19, incomplete=1)**

| CONTROL | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| HIGH 5 | | | | 1 response | 6 responses |
| 4 | | | | | 5 responses |
| 3 | | | | 3 responses | 2 responses |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 1 | 1 response | | | | |

LOW ——— COMMITMENT ——— HIGH

Note: The grayed boxes represent areas in which a respondent considers himself/herself to have low-to-ambivalent levels of commitment and control over school-initiated changes. These strong positive statements can be considered an indication of the individual respondents' beliefs about changes at DBE.

***Comments on Commitment***

Teachers' written comments echoed these data and offer insight into individual philosophical and practical views of change at DBE. These comments are valuable for their insight and serve as an informal reliability check, corroborating the respondents' thinking. The data-gathering activity was geared to examine the broader picture of change. Such beliefs, and the values that they are based upon, reflect attitudes which have a powerful effect on behavior (Rokeach, 1970).

For reading clarity, the score of the pre-synthesized statement chosen prior to the individual's written response on commitment is included at the end of each quote in parentheses. (Recall that the scoring was done using a 1 to 5 rank, low to high.)

> *The important thing about change is that it is progressive. Some change finds the necessity to change other things. (5)*
>
> *Changes are not only important to myself, but to us as a society. (5)*
>
> *Schools must change to meet the needs of the child, not have the child fit the mold that the school has set for education. (5)*
>
> *The changes are for the best. They will improve our students' learning outcomes. (5)*
>
> *I believe in this program. We have seen a need for change to better our educational system and we have initiated programs to provide for our needs. I can see a positive change in our curriculum. (5)*

Obviously control, the complement to commitment in this context, was an issue to many respondents. Though these comments were made in relation to commitment, they have implications for concern with control that have surfaced in previous discussions. Also, though commitment is not a central theme of this study, it is important here for two reasons. First, those who share a collective vision are committed to it; second, commitment is imperative to successful learning communities. Again, the score regarding commitment (range of 1=low to 5=high) is included in parentheses at the end of the quotes.

> *I try to go with the flow. (4)*
>
> *Teachers need to be the ones to judge their students and what they need. It's nice to have the materials available to challenge all levels in the classroom, [but] change needs to be made based on children, not a program presented to you that worked somewhere else. (1)*
>
> *I can see many benefits of some of the changes. But I feel that sometimes the changes occur too rapidly. I'd like to have more time to get used to some of the programs and feel like I'm implementing them correctly. (4)*

***Comments on Control***

Only eight of the 19 respondents chose to add comments on the issue of control. The first two comments below are separated from the others to show the extremes in opinion. It should be noted that only one person felt that s/he had no control. Others comments ranged from positive to enthusiastic in rating this sensitive issue of reform, the loci of control. The second statement of the first pair is also reflective of a teacher who prefers a more traditional and transmissionist (Brooks & Brooks, 1993) approach to teaching and learning. The score for control (range of 1=low to 5=high) is included in parentheses at the end of the quotes.

> *We as teachers evaluated several programs and chose the present program as best suiting our needs. This was not from the top down. Administration has been helpful and encouraging. The teachers have input into areas we feel need to be improved and changed. (5)*

> *Change consists of learning what is taught. All programs should consist of a group of students taught materials and [then] see how they function after graduation in the real world, filling out applications, forms [etc.], without computer assistance. Can they spell, write, and/or understand what is asked [of them]? (1)*

All of the other teachers' and administrators' comments were positive. These statements indicate a range of need for loci of control from the individual to the group. One should consider that, when the group is in control in a shared decision-making setting, very few individuals can feel completely in control themselves, since group allegiance requires personal compromise and sacrifice of a degree of autonomy. Again, the score regarding control (range of 1 = low to 5 = high) is included in parentheses at the end of the quotes.

> *Of course things are changing. . . . The administration needs to listen to parents and teachers for feedback to know how to modify and adapt. (Did not choose a prewritten control statement, but checked a level 5 commitment statement).*

> *Again I feel it lay with the individual teacher. (5)*

> *All persons involved must have input into change and feel they, and their opinions, matter and have worth. (4)*

> *As a teacher, change is important in order to keep up with new trends. (5)*

> *We have been given a freedom to change within guidelines that allow us to try what we feel is necessary. We aren't afraid to ask. (4)*

The issue or tension of control presents an honest dilemma for schools in transition. Each school must find a delicate balance between autonomy and dictatorship. Along with these formally gathered data, over the period of the study, many informal comments from the teaching staff corroborated the

high level of commitment and the modest concern over loci of control. An examination of this tension and a related tension that arose from the case team's perspective forms the core of the following discussion.

## Dilemmas

Dilemmas are critical issues that persist and for which there are advantages and disadvantages to any choice. One dilemma concerns one of the university researcher's views on teaching and curricular priorities. This tension calls into question the treasured view of some educators who advocate teacher empowerment within the school community, almost to the exclusion of anything save student-focused instruction. Perspective, context, and balance are important, as Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1994) note, "... it doesn't mean that teacher empowerment is not important. It means in many settings, it is not enough" (p. 3). Discussion on this external tension has value as a lesson in managing researchers who must work through their own biases; the resolution provided further insight into DBE as a learning community. To a lesser degree, it was initially an issue for other members of the research team outside of the DBE staff, as well.

### What Do We Want Our Teachers to Be? The Researcher's Dilemma

The DBE case strikes at the heart of one of the enduring dilemmas in policy debates regarding teaching and methods to improve the teaching and learning processes. This is especially important to teacher educators. Are the teachers at DBE professionals or artists in the practice of teaching? Using the frame of reference of teacher as professional helped to address this dilemma and provided further insight into the changing and expanding roles of DBE teachers.

#### *Being a Professional*

Being a professional in the classical sociological meaning of professionalism implies that teachers possess a special body of knowledge and skills about the teaching and learning process and that they are expert practitioners of that knowledge and associated skills. This is what Shulman and his colleagues (Shulman, 1986; Wilson, Shulman & Richert, 1987) refer to as "content specific pedagogy," that is the knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical skills and the ability to meld them to make the learning experience the best it can be for the child. (The more expert the teacher, the more likely that teacher knows the subject, knows how to teach and, most importantly, knows how to "teach the subject.") This ability is context-based (know your setting/clients/students) and requires the continuous exercise of professional discretion about the best courses of action to take in particular circumstances.

As implied above, expertise is often a part of the measure of a professional. One does not reach the level of professional without competence. This ability, demonstrated in a myriad of ways, is a key element in distinguishing teachers along a continuum of expertise (Berliner, 1988; Jakubowski & Tobin, 1991; Shulman, 1986; Varrella, 1997). For ardent advocates of this view of teacher professionalism, the idea of standardized, routinized teaching materials and practices within and across classrooms would seem the antithesis of good practice. Teacher individualism and the informed exercise of freedom of choice in determining learner needs and appropriate teaching interventions would epitomize the essence of good practice.

The crux of the dilemma was the impression that it seemed that DBE had opted for the teacher as master technician version of professionalism. Programs were introduced, training was provided, and the teachers began institutionalization. There were feedback loops and room for choice, but it was within a defined structure (e.g., 90-minute reading blocks and five-day WorldLab cycles).

***Ownership and Professionalism in Dawson-Bryant Elementary***

Examining the changes in the professional lives of teachers at DBE in the context of time and changing roles was helpful. By all accounts, 10 years ago, pedagogical individualism reigned in the schools and classrooms of the district elementary schools. "Everyone was in their own classroom, happily doing their thing." The teachers and administrative staff at DBE describe the elementary schools, before consolidation, as a setting in which virtually every teacher was implementing his/her own reading program, for example. This began to change with new leadership.

The leadership of the superintendent, through recruitment and support for like-minded school administrators, and the philosophy of "every kid is worthy and every kid can learn," sent teachers and administrators to other successful schools to confer and collaborate. Coupling these experiences with teacher frustration about declining student performance in reading opened many eyes to alternatives. These factors and state proficiencies fueled the rapid shift towards greater consistency in the curriculum and teaching and learning processes across the district at the elementary school level. Once teachers agreed upon consistency (i.e., Success for All in 1994), they also gave up a portion of their individual rights to choice.

The combination of external experiences and internal needs provided the appropriate compromise choice. Teachers and administrators had been visiting other schools, attending workshops, and reading contemporary educational literature. All this was done at the encouragement and insistence of the new superintendent. The internal need to address declining reading performance and concerns over proficiencies guided their choices and the way they would teach in the future. Thus, the Deering (1992-93) staff set about exploring programs that would work and that were informed by sound theory.

Sensitive to these realities, the leadership team at the elementary school level took a position that questioned the view that all teachers are equally effective and challenged the idea that the quality of edu-

cation can be ensured by relying on individual teacher discretion in the classroom. A compromise between the two extreme positions was reached, leaving room for the creative teachers, as well as the more instrumental and technically inclined teachers.

DBE collectively adopted a new program that worked. The SFA reading, conflict resolution, and Wings WorldLabs programs are proven programs. When implemented as designed, the student results (learning, engagement, and behavior) were quickly apparent to teachers (though the impact on external test scores may not be as immediately apparent). The programs were laid out and presented in ways that teachers found understandable and practical, and the inservice training provided through SFA was sufficiently powerful to enable them to effectively use the SFA programs in a short period of time. Some teachers indicated they were comfortable with the reading program format in three months. The ongoing research and program refinement from Johns Hopkins and the strategic reliance on training by teachers within the SFA network all figure in the SFA support system. Since initiation, of course, DBE has become a test and model site.

This aligns well with contemporary research. Successful implementation of new programs is quite attainable when the program materials are practical and yield expected results, when effective and sustained assistance is provided (i.e., experienced users and trainers, — often one and the same), when changes genuinely fit local needs, and when there is strong administrative support for implementation (Anderson, 1995; Apple, 1993; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Wilson et al., 1996). SFA, as implemented at Dawson-Bryant Elementary, met these criteria well.

Teacher commitment to implementation of new programs often follows rather than precedes early implementation experiences and measures of success based on short-term results. That is, the wish to change (contrasted with just trying it) within the conceptual change continuum (Posner et al., 1982) may be the last step, rather than the first one. At DBE, the majority of the teachers believe that the SFA programs work. This is a context-based opinion, contrasting the former frustrations with existing programs and practices that did not help the students. These successes gave the DBE teachers an enhanced sense of professional efficacy. For example, one teacher who had been involved in a very exciting social studies simulation from WorldLab noted with pride, "I think this will be remembered. A regular test would just be forgotten . . . . this [three-day simulation] made it personal. It made it more real." (See social studies vignette in Chapter Three.)

## Being Overwhelmed and Dealing With It: The Teacher's Dilemma

*Too many things and not enough me.* – DBE teacher

This one statement, more than any other, sums up the dilemma that teachers in DBE face each day. In the Experience of Change Activity discussed in Chapter Three, the word "pressurized" was commonly chosen and placed in the "sometimes" category. This was the case for the teachers whether they were

discussing technology or curriculum, or both. This pressure arises from the need to deal with the plethora of technological and curricular innovations being introduced, field-tested, refined, and institutionalized continually at DBE. Although the teachers are somewhat ambivalent about their role in choice (i.e., control), they consistently demonstrate a high level of commitment to the changes underway at DBE, most certainly including those that are curriculum-specific.

## Control, Commitment, and Growing Pains: The Dilemma of Reform

The DBE teachers are committed to reform, but there is less certainty when one considers issues of control of change. An implication here is that of feeling pressured when you begin to lose control. These issues have been examined above in the context of the strategy for mapping change, referred to as the Initiation of Change (Ainscow et al., 1995), particularly in the context of control of the change.

Symptomatic of a loss of control is that feeling that, "we are going so fast I can't keep up." Beyond being pressured, the teachers (specific to the five involved with the Initiation of Change interview) felt that they were sometimes worried (two individuals), confused (three individuals), disappointed (three individuals), irritated (three individuals), anxious (three individuals), angry (two individuals), frustrated (two individuals) and of, course, pressured (four individuals). These words are directly drawn from adjectives listed in the Initiation of Change activity; however, comments were also made in other contexts that corroborate with these terms. These data were gleaned from field notes, transcripts, and focus groups and includes a majority of the DBE teachers

Readers are cautioned to keep this particular tension in perspective. As one teacher so aptly noted, she expected to experience these feelings sometimes because she worried about doing her job well. This is not an indication of failure or something bad. In fact, this particular tension might almost be considered a growing pain of reform.

One may wonder how the teachers exist in this pressured environment, and do, so remarkably well. The reasons are many, and not all of them could be uncovered adequately within the Transforming Learning Communities time frame; however, four that strike at the heart are the overall abilities of the teachers, their commitment to the children, commitment to the profession of teaching, and faith in the leadership. DBE teachers always invest a serious effort in instituting those changes that are expected of them, whether they perceive that they are joint decisions or decisions from above. These are common, if laudable, teacher traits. At DBE, however, teacher commitment also reaches to the school as a whole; this would seem to be a result of the sustained district and building investment in collaboration and shared decision making.

Time and again, the teachers and parents in various direct and indirect ways recognized the effort, intent, and effectiveness of the player-coaches (e.g., teacher-leaders such as the parent liaison and tech-

nology coordinator, who both teach every day) and the coaching staff (the administrators and specialists). This faith and trust by the teachers in their colleagues and administrators allow them to jump in without always knowing the depth of the water. One of the administrators argues that creative teachers are able to build from the program structure and materials and still be creative, and that less creative teachers have options to choose from within the curricular frameworks and a firm foundation to stand on. While not everyone agreed with this view, it was a view held by a large majority of the teachers interviewed. Faith in leadership may be the most critical factor in this instance — that is, faith in leadership at the district level and at the building level. If that faith did not exist, the school would not be the kind of dynamic and transforming learning community that it has become.

Faith on the part of the teachers in the promise and success of the curricular programs may also emanate unconsciously from another source. The community and the external support networks (e.g., local higher education institution and social service agencies) are ebullient about DBE being a good place for children to work, learn, and grow. This kind of external nourishment from a community that has in the past been very distant, if not hostile, must have a positive effect on the entire certified and professional staff.

## Looking Back

Members of the Dawson-Bryant Elementary leadership team shared some of the lessons they have learned, an emerging challenge that has been recently dealt with, and some of the elements of change in DBE that have been most important to them.

### Elements of Successful Change

A framework drawn from contemporary change literature was used as a background for this discussion. None of these factors are new or earth-shaking. Rather, their significance is that they are in place in recognizable ways in DBE. Both the factors and examples of factor-related challenges, or previous conditions and/or outcomes, are briefly discussed within this context.

1. *A systems view of change is important.* All the elements of the DBE school system were taken into consideration. This reflects reaching from the front porch to the corridors and into the classroom. The challenge is to continue to work with all of the stakeholders. Two lessons learned: (1) Service agencies change personnel often. To keep open lines of communication, you must stay in touch! The SFA Family Support Team, among others, allows this to happen regularly. (2) By keeping open lines of communication, support comes quickly and frequently, provided the school lives the relationship as a mutualistic

one (e.g., recently there was a tragedy at the school — two telephone calls and one hour later, and two local service agencies had people on-site).

2. *You cannot change without having a sound and sensible philosophical commitment.* This should be explicit, but expect it to mature with experience. DBE's philosophy began to take shape in the early 1990s and was shaped largely by its collective commitment to the welfare of the child. This philosophy, simply stated, is, "every child can and should learn [and will learn in DBE]." A philosophy based on serving the majority of the children preceded this philosophy, but a piece of it was, "well, not every child can learn." Declining test scores and, secondarily, proficiencies were cited as catalysts that jump-started the evolution to the more assertive current philosophy.

3. *Short- and long-term goals must be continually revisited, revised, and improved.* This has been done using shared decision and site-based management strategies. The maturation of the technology goals continually adjusted by the grant and project-related activities are a good example. An outcome is the technology plan that was developed collaboratively by teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. The challenge is finding productive ways for people to revisit goals to refocus, refresh, or extend. (See also below, "A Recent Challenge.")

4. *To sustain ongoing change, a shared vision and a moral purpose must emerge out of the commitment of the participants.* This has a lofty sound to it, but is very down-to-earth at DBE. The best example of a shared vision was the commitment to the SFA program in 1993 and the agreement by teachers to attend three days, gratis, during the summer of 1994. Elements of SFA, such as the Family Support Team, reach to the community, supporting the goals of the school and the goals of the SFA program. The DBE team cites the schoolwide commitment to nurturing a healthy ethic of work, responsibility, and cooperation among the children as an example of the school's moral purpose — which also represents an element of the shared vision of what kind of school DBE should be. These same characteristics are nurtured among the DBE staff.

5. *It must be accepted that the process is hugely complex, non-linear, and that many [if not most] pitfalls cannot be foreseen.* Some pitfalls are larger than others are. One unresolved challenge is that of the incurable technophobic. DBE has found that some teachers, no matter how much support has been provided using every local and regional technology advocate/inservice provider possible, just are not comfortable with contemporary classroom technologies. Every teacher has a laptop computer, but some have abused their privileges and others tend not to take them along at appropriate times because of the inconvenience of carrying them. In a recent instance, a laptop that was not being used effectively by a teacher was reallocated to another individual.

6. *The result must include a change in people's ideas, beliefs, and attitudes regarding what DBE can and should do for and with children.* This is an ongoing challenge, to move teachers from independence to interdependence in teaching, planning, and problem solving. In some instances it has become apparent that individuals have not been comfortable with the philosophy (number 2, above) or the shared vision for, teaching and learning (number 4, above). The administrative team has chosen to reassign people who are not comfortable with the direction that the school is going. There are occasional casualties of reform.

7. *Sustained change requires leadership that is supportive, decisive, and willing to listen.* DBE is successful in part because of the leadership team that is in place. More than one person has responsibilities for the good of the whole school, and delegation of authority is commonplace (e.g., relative responsibilities of the Family Support Team facilitator). This philosophy is an extension of the general philosophy of the district, based on the shared decision-making model. DBE also realizes that, on occasion, individuals must exercise the discretionary power of their position independently for the good of the school (e.g., realigning teaching assignments because of philosophical /implementation conflicts).

## A Recent Challenge

A recent dilemma that surfaced was related to continued successful implementation of the SFA program at the classroom level. Without realizing it, those staff involved with the beginnings of SFA assumed that newer teachers would just know the ins and outs of successful daily implementation of the SFA/Roots and Wings curricula. It became apparent, however, that this was not the case. The administration was able to secure extra funding to invite a facilitator from Johns Hopkins out for a refresher workshop. As a follow-up, on three to four occasions in the 1998-99 school year, newer teachers will participate in implementation checks. These sessions are done in a collaborative team setting with external teacher/facilitators from the SFA network. The goal was to strengthen and support, not admonish, and the response was timely.

This response and strategy aligns with the framework provided by Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1994), in which the authors note that attention to structural conditions will strengthen philosophical commitment, understanding, and shared values. This extends reform at the classroom level in the truest sense (i.e., structural attention guided by shared goals and common philosophical underpinnings). This might, by Fullan's (1994) measure, be a "friendly problem." It is symptomatic of a system in a state of change (Katz & Kahn, 1978) and it can also be considered a growing pain of sustained change. It could have become unfriendly, though, if avenues for support were not opened.

## Additional Elements of Change

Among the myriad changes and activities within DBE, there are some which stood out as most prominent for the team. Service activities noted include those that quietly serve the needs of the community, such as the latch-key room, a DBE-sponsored after-school program for kids with working parents or guardians. The community partnerships were mentioned almost immediately. These partnerships have been in place and sustained for such a long period of time that they can be considered entrenched. There is a diverse variety of partnerships, but the two mentioned were DBE's relationships with specialists in the Department of Education, who constantly provide support and expertise, and DBE's ongoing collaborations with the local social service agencies, particularly the mental health agencies.

A second point was the changed roles of the teaching staff as teachers have gone from independence to interdependence. This is a point of pride and frustration, because building networks that are truly productive, even in a single building, is challenging and time-consuming. Another example is the changing roles of the special needs faculty members, who now spend time in the classrooms of other teachers, making the welfare of the special needs children "our" responsibility instead of "your" responsibility (in times prior to inclusion).

A source of pride and frustration stems from the organizational traits that DBE has developed as a learning community. As the programs, schooling, and curricula become more interdependent and complex, continual adjustments are required. This growth is a source of pride, but also a source of distress. More complexity and new initiatives translate into new challenges that need to be addressed and/or resolved. As time goes on, the members of the DBE community are becoming better and better at learning to check their egos at the door. This liberates people to focus on the challenges and needs of the circumstances more effectively and be less protective of personal turf, since the school is jointly owned by all and the welfare of the children is paramount.

One member of the leadership team related that "change" gets in your blood: the more you know, the more you see, the more you can and need to do!"

## DBE as a Gathered Community

Very few schools ever become ideal learning communities, but then ideals are sometimes far from reality, and DBE is a very real and vibrant environment. Exactly when a school works through the elements and deserves the label "learning community," is subjective at best. DBE, by measures from the literature on reform, change, systems, and sociological theory (Astuto et al., 1994; Fullan, 1994; Fullan, 1996; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Merz & Furman, 1997; Senge, 1990), is transforming into a learning community. Such a community is peopled by individuals who have developed personal competence, share a vision of what

they wish their school to become, and have a voice both individually within the system and collectively as a school. The members of the community learn individually and organizationally based on the power of their shared vision and collaborative interdependence (Senge, 1990).

## The *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* Continuum

Sergiovanni (1994) points us to a theory of community that supports the claim that, fundamentally, DBE is a learning community. These terms are *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. They are a set of concepts that are considered seminal in sociology and are attributed to the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnes (Sergiovanni, 1994). *Gemeinschaft* translates to a community that is based on affect, kinship, and common membership within a habitat or locale and can even be translated into family. In such a community, people relate to each other because doing so has its own intrinsic meaning and worth. *Gesellschaft* translates into a society that is based on rules and contractual relationships, where people relate to each other to reach some goal and to gain some benefit. These goals and benefits may be mutually shared or more independent, but they benefit the whole in some way, whether the whole is a corporate organization or a society (Merz & Furman, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Without delving more deeply into the multitudinous aspects of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, let it suffice to say that these two elements represent the ends of a continuum. It is recognized that schools, as social organizations, can be placed along this continuum. It has been argued that schools have moved too far toward the society, rule-driven *gesellschaft*, and in so doing lose identity and personality necessary to remain an ideal place to learn and to work (Merz & Furman, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1994).

## Toward *Gemeinschaft*

It is our contention that DBE has moved progressively toward *gemeinschaft*. Merz and Furman (1997) point to Nell Noddings' work (1984; 1992), which potently describes the need for caring (and commitment) and the emotional dimensions necessary for schools to succeed today. Caring about the children, the community, the school, and the greater good is a core element in DBE, in practice and in philosophy.

The lack of connections among aspects of reform is often pointed to as indication of failure or potential for failure (Anderson, 1995; Astuto et al., 1994; Senge, 1990). One of the strengths of DBE is that connectedness exists. Specifically, the ties between the reform strands of community, technology, and curricular improvement are strong. In fact, one of the greater challenges of this case was to tease apart the strands to explain their contribution and significance to the whole. DBE as a learning community has established partnerships across the corridors, among the classrooms, and all the way down State Route 243 to the front porch. The result is a greater unification, through cooperation to attend to the common task, for the good of the child, creating a better place to work, attend school, and learn. It has been shown "that schools with higher professional community scores had higher student achievement" scores (Merz & Furman, 1997, p. 69).

The growth and formulation of a shared vision that has been described here represents the community of mind that is considered a *gemeinschaftlich* relationship among co-workers (Merz & Furman, 1997). The resulting responsibilities based on position, rank, and specialized expertise are more *gesellschaftlich*, serving as an example of how a school can and should contain elements of both *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*.

## Conclusions

School change is ubiquitous and continual and seldom linear. It requires a penchant on the part of leadership for seizing the moment and the opportunity to move ahead for the good of the learners in school. This does not happen in a vacuum: teachers, parents, the community businesses, and social services are involved at all points, building and nurturing the vision through implementation, evaluation, and adaptation. DBE has worked to find a balance between *gemeinschaftlich* and *gesellschaftlich*. It is critical to remember that this is a moving target, typified by some of the dilemmas and tensions existing at the moment at DBE. Those too will be addressed, because learning communities are dynamic and thus are constantly in a state of transformation.

DBE is a school that is sensitive to its community both inside and outside of the school walls. The focus is on the child and matters of student learning. DBE has overcome many of the obstacles, tensions, and dilemmas related to previously declining student performance, staffing issues, and consolidation. In building this, they have built a two-way bridge to the parents and community. This has been accomplished through persistence and collaboration. There is strong and consistent leadership from the district, school administrative team, and teacher-leaders, and a general caring-about-people philosophy prevails. The net result is a sense of community with an ear for all stakeholders in the education of the Dawson-Bryant Elementary children and a heart for each and every child.

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# APPENDIX A
# METHODOLOGY

*Note: This is an abbreviated version, which of course "matured" as the case progressed.*

## Introduction

*Whatever it takes!* – Dawson-Bryant Elementary motto from "Success for All"

In the original Transforming Learning Communities proposal, "transforming" was referred to as an adjective and as a verb. The research team, composed of Dawson-Bryant Elementary faculty and staff, of Dawson-Bryant School District, and Ohio University staff, embraces this philosophy. We recognize the dynamic nature of the change process (adjective) and the need to work closely with our colleagues in exploring (verb) Dawson-Bryant Elementary (DBE). However, we see the measure in DBE to be an exemplary school in transition rather than one that has "arrived," because. for a community like DBE, the commitment to make tomorrow better than yesterday for the students, parents, and staff is a life-long one. Using this wider-angle lens which will focus inward to the school and outward to the surrounding community, we intend to explore the history, changes, and culture of Dawson-Bryant Elementary, a safe haven for learners of all ages, tucked in a corner of the town of Coal Grove, Ohio.

Dawson-Bryant Elementary is situated in one of the most economically depressed areas of south central Ohio, yet DBE is a positive place to work, learn, and, in a sense, live. This circumstance emerged as the tangible result of a shared vision and the development of a learning community within DBE. As noted above, the transformation is not and never will be over; nor is it a linear process; nor is DBE without its weaknesses, challenges, and flaws. Dawson-Bryant Elementary's successes are numerous, including recognition through grants and programs, not the least of which is the Venture Capital Program. Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine selected local dimensions of school change that facilitated DBE's entry into this apparently sustained transformative state. The greatest challenge to the research team may be to sort through the myriad elements to capture key characteristics and weave a discussion worthy of sharing with our colleagues and fellow community members. We anticipate elements of our findings to be common to other schools, with similar commitments and other elements to be particular to DBE.

An indication of the success of a learning organization is the participants' willingness to learn more about themselves. This represents the evaluative aspect of this case, which will provide feedback for future adjustments and modifications to sustain the spirit and habit of continual renewal within DBE. This is evaluation with "a little e" and should be non-threatening, because its purpose is to facilitate further improvements and growth, not dole out reward or punishment.

For the external and internal members of the research team, assembling this case study of DBE is an adventure in discovery. The research team is in the final stages of refining questions that reflect the unique nature of the educational change process at DBE. This descriptive study seeks to identify the transformative aspects of DBE and secondarily has an evaluative undertone providing formative feedback to the DBE community. This secondary benefit is nearly impossible to avoid, since case work such as this invites the reader to make personal judgments regarding merit and worth of programs, efforts, and evidence presented as indicators of success and successful process.

## Goals

- Create timelines for change that indicate milestones, the dynamic nature of the learning community in DBE, and explore the nonlinear nature of sustainable change at DBE.
- Identify structures, curricula, programs, and additional building commitments significant to improved student success.
- Determine and explore the key evolving strategies and support networks enabling collaboration and cooperation within the DBE community.
- Identify elements of successful collaboration as well as barriers to collaboration (accessibility, lines of communications, etc.).
- Examine staff/teacher/community member's perceptions of governance of the school, and staff/teacher/community member's roles and responsibilities therein. (This will, of course, be interwoven with administrative responsibilities.)
- Describe and explore the unique roles of the parent community and community at large in DBE's learning community.
- Provide a view of the impact of DBE's efforts to support the children with social programs and special community outreach efforts.
- Determine key motivation factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) which currently sustain the transformative environment.
- Consider the current catalysts for change in light of long-term sustainability.
- Offer DBE as a model to inform and guide change agendas in other schools and communities.

## Conceptual Organizer

*How do learning communities in schools develop?*

Site-specific research questions will focus on the themes of the community of DBE. This organizer is an extension of the proposed TLC organizer and includes an additional category, "from the front porch." This modification is based on the unique connections between the community and DBE, as well as on an overt commitment to a systems view of change.

| Strategies for Data Gathering<br>**OBSERVATION**<br>• interviews<br>• writing & working groups | **Dawson-Bryant Elementary Community** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *In the Classroom (students and teachers)* | *In the Corridors (teachers/staff/etc.)* | *In the Boardroom (administrative decisions and their effect)* | *From the Front Porch (the connection between DBE and the community)* |
| Collaboration (mutual development and support) | • Partnerships in learning in the classroom<br>• Support and interactions outside of the classroom | • Team planning and work<br>• Sense of shared vision<br>• Evidence of commitment to work with the diverse members of the DBE community | • Perception of community members (from teachers to parents) regarding their voice in decision making & action taking<br>• Evidence of community voice in decisions | • Evidence of teacher/parent-community interactions<br>• Evidence of community voice in decisions |
| Inquiry (sense making) | • Understanding of & commitment to student learning goals of DBE (e.g., SFA) | • Identification of key elements in the DBE improvement agenda<br>• Ability to identify key features of programs<br>• Openness to ideas | • Appreciation & understanding of for administrative decisions and actions<br>• [Extension of above] Sense of ownership is decisions | • Perceptions of DBE as a student and parent-"friendly" place<br>• Value placed on DBE as key element of the community |

| | *In the Classroom (students and teachers)* | *In the Corridors (teachers/staff/etc.)* | *In the Boardroom (administrative decisions and their effect)* | *From the Front Porch (the connection between DBE and the community)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Integration (connections & implementation)<br>Observation interviews group activities | • Related to collaboration<br>• Evidence of work toward the stated goals | • Teachers support for each other and other staff/community members<br>• Vision of how pieces contribute to the whole of DBE | • Vision of how pieces contribute to the whole of DBE | • Understanding of school changes evidenced in DBE and connections to children and community |

The components included are presented as models and examples, not as limiting factors.

## Data Collection

This case study will draw upon multiple sources of data, including document review, observations, interviews, and surveys. The intent of data collection is to provide a historical context for understanding this school's change, as well as to examine current aspects of DBE's learning community. The study is designed to be flexible. The research team anticipates continual, incremental improvement and refinements throughout the data-gathering period.

### Document Review

A variety of school and district-related documents are relevant to the general focus of this study. Identification of the critical documents will be based on feedback from faculty and staff at DBE. These documents will serve as generative elements to reconstruct the timelines and events significant to the development of the DBE learning community. A preliminary list for consideration includes:

1. *Venture Capital Grant*
2. *"Success for All" program and implementation*
3. *Technology Plan*
4. *Assessment Reports, i.e., "Success for All" (Johns Hopkins University); "Continuous Improvment Report" (Conrath & Trout Associates); and Parent Surveys*

5. *District Guidelines*
6. *Building Guidelines*
7. *Faculty handbook*
8. *Parent/Student handbook*
9. *Guidelines for the relationships with community or social service agencies involved at DBE.*
10. *Other*

## Exploring Classrooms, Corridors, and Administrative Settings: Observations

Observations will be completed using informal and semi-structured approaches. General observations will be made of representative classrooms and meetings and interactions of the population of DBE. Specific meetings and/or community events may be attended as well for general observation. Observations will focus on both routine activities as well and particular aspects associated with successful practices identified through other data-gathering opportunities. These data will be coded and be used to identify, confirm and/or question collateral findings in the study.

Particular attention will be paid to classroom interactions once trust between the Ohio University researchers and teachers has been strengthened. These will be both general in nature and more specific using the Science Classroom Observation Rubric from the ESTEEM Program (Expert Science Teacher Education Evaluation Model; Burry-Stock, 1996). This instrument will be used in a qualitative/quantitative sense as a measure of teaching related to content-specific pedagogies, facilitating behaviors, context-specific pedagogies, and general content knowledge. The Science Classroom Observation Rubric has been proven valid and reliable in a number of settings for mathematics and science and should generalize well to this circumstance, recognizing certain developmental limitations among the children in the early elementary grades. Random samples of students will be interviewed as well. All students will be selected from the class rosters of the teachers observed.

Teachers selected for observation will be identified randomly based on an early (K-3) and upper elementary (4-5) stratification. No teacher will be observed without his or her express written consent, and all observations will be anonymous, save the reference to the early and upper elementary categories.

In general, observations may include:

1. *Classroom observations*
2. *Grade-level team meetings and faculty meetings, as applicable*
3. *Committee meetings, as applicable*
4. *Selected parent meetings (e.g., "Sowing Family Values," "Together We Can," and Parent-Teacher Organization)*

5. *Other*

## Exploring Classrooms, Corridors, Administrative Settings, and the Front Porch: Interviews

Individual interviews and small focus-group (3-5 persons) interviews will be completed. Individual faculty and administrative interviews will be used to facilitate discussion of the historical context and to build timelines indicating major events at DBE. Small-group interviews will focus on dialogue related to the conceptual framework and goals of the study.

In order to provide a rich and complex description of the learning community, interviews will access as many of the involved adults (teachers, parents, and community members) as possible within the limitations of the study timeline.

Semi-structured interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed. Informal interviews will be written up from interviewer's notes. Data gathered from all interviews will be scanned for thematic characteristics, coded and analyzed by the university partners of the research team, and folded into the discussion to further validate findings and observations through triangulation.

***Individual Interviews:***

1. *Donald Washburn, district superintendent*
2. *Brenda Haas, co-principal*
3. *Steve Easterline, co-principal*
4. *Tom Castle, guidance counselor*
5. *Brenda Sparks, parent liaison*
6. *Sharon Morgan, Title programs*
7. *Judy Latka, special education*
8. *David Mays, Technology specialist*
9. *Selected teachers (to be representative of perspectives, programs)*
10. *Selected parents (identified through recommendations)*
11. *Johns Hopkins "Success for All" representative*
12. *Collaborating [social] agency representatives*

***Small-Group Interviews:***

13. *Grade groups randomly selected*
14. *Parent focus groups based on referrals by school faculty and staff and parents*
15. *Noncertified staff small group*
16. *Other*

## Surveys

We will review already existing survey data on various DBE programs. This will include existing parent surveys. These data will not be formally coded, but they will be scanned and utilized as sources for validation of observations and the grounded development of themes built through interviews and interactions with the DBE community.

In addition, classroom teachers (from the randomly selected observation group) will use a student survey technique. As a regular part of their classroom activities, teachers will ask students to complete the following two open-ended questions:

1. *What I like best about my school is ...*
2. *I think our school could be an even better place if ...*

These student responses will be anonymous and identified only by grade-level groups. Student responses will be analyzed for thematic characteristics and used as further evidence for validation of observations, emergent themes, and as indicators of success within the classroom.

## Developmental/Evaluative Contributions

Our study is designed not only to provide the final case study as a research product, but also to provide information to the school in their ongoing development. In this way, the research team will be making a contribution to the school as it undertakes its research of the school. Listed below are some of the anticipated strategies for this development phase of the project.

1. Meet with already pre-existing groups. For example, as we meet with grade-level faculty groups and involve ourselves in a directed dialogue, the reflective nature of such discussions will add to the teachers' understanding of their school processes and the varied perspectives of their colleagues. These kinds of active reflection might not otherwise occur.
2. Cross-assessment of special programs and projects to the school as a whole will be found within the body of the case report. Along with being included in the case report, these findings can be disseminated through other internal lines of communication within DBE.

## Other Potentially Useful Instruments and Research Tools

It is anticipated that some of the instruments found in the following article and the corresponding manual will also be used, once we have further immersed ourselves in the understanding Dawson-Bryant Elementary School as a transforming learning community:

Ainscow, M., D. Hargreaves, et al. (1994). *Mapping change in schools: The Cambridge manual of research techniques*. Cambridge CB2 2BX, UK (telephone 01223 369631), Authors.

Ainscow, M., D. H. Hargreaves, et al. (1995). "Mapping the process of change in schools: The development of six new research techniques." *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(2): 75-90.

# APPENDIX B

## THE EXPERIENCE OF CHANGE SCHOOL AGGREGATE PROFILE MATRIX

| | Feeling | Participant 1 | P 2 | P 3 | P 4 | P 5 | P 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ++ very positive | Committed | | | | | | |
| | Enthusiastic | | | | | | |
| | Exhilarated | | | | | | |
| | Optimistic | | | | | | |
| | Confident | | | | | | |
| | Stimulated | | | | | | |
| | Supported | | | | | | |
| | Valued | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| + positive | | | | | | | |
| | Comfortable | | | | | | |
| | Pleased | | | | | | |
| | Interested | | | | | | |
| | Satisfied | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| – negative | | | | | | | |
| | Worried | | | | | | |
| | Confused | | | | | | |
| | Disappointed | | | | | | |
| | Irritated | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| = Very negative | | | | | | | |
| | Anxious | | | | | | |
| | Bored | | | | | | |
| | Cynical | | | | | | |
| | Sad | | | | | | |
| | Angry | | | | | | |
| | Frustrated | | | | | | |
| | Isolated | | | | | | |
| | Pressurized | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | Key / ++ / + / = / = / (selecting A: often) | / / / | / / / | / / / | / / / | / / / | / / / |
| | Extra words score | | | | | | |

Code: A: OFTEN / B: SOMETIMES / C: HARDLY EVER / D: DOESN'T SEEM RELEVANT (WASTE BIN) 93

# APPENDIX C

# DeROLPH v. STATE

*(This material is appended to provide further detail regarding this unique case, which is germane but not central to this case study.)*

## Historical Background

The Dawson-Bryant School District was a plaintiff in a lawsuit and resulting court order in the case of DeRolph v. State, Case No. 22043 (Perry County Common Pleas; 1994). In addition to Dawson-Bryant, the school districts of Lima and Youngstown and the Northern Local and Southern Local school districts of Perry County were plaintiffs in the litigation. The schools sought a determination that education is a fundamental right and that Ohio's existing system for funding public education failed to comply with constitutional requirements of equality and uniformity.

During 1993, the court held extensive hearings. The school superintendent (Don Washburn), students, parents, board of education and community members provided testimony and written exhibits regarding the status of the district.

On July 1, 1994, Judge Linton Lewis issued a 478-page opinion containing findings of fact and conclusions of law. The Court decided the case in the plaintiffs' favor. The Court determined:

> *The system of funding public education in Ohio, as described in this Complaint has created constitutionally impermissible disparities in the level and types of educational opportunity for the pupils attending the plaintiff school districts as compared to those available elsewhere in Ohio (...) Plaintiffs are thereby deprived of equal protection of law, due process of law, and uniform operation of laws, all as guaranteed by the Ohio Constitution.* (p. 457).

The ruling was appealed to the Ohio State Supreme Court, which issued a ruling on March 24, 1997, that stated, "the current legislation fails to provide for a thorough and efficient system of common schools, in violation of section 2, Article VI, of the Ohio Constitution." This matter was referred back to the Perry County Court of Common Pleas for further proceedings.

On February 26, 1999, a Perry County Court of Common Pleas decision was handed down, again in favor of the plaintiffs.

This decision is being appealed.

# TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES SITES

## DAWSON-BRYANT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Dawson-Bryant Local Schools (Lawrence County)
Ohio University

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

1 **Brentmoor Elementary School**
**Mentor Exempted Village Schools**
**Cleveland State University**

2 **Cranwood Learning Academy**
**Cleveland City Schools**
**Cleveland State University**

3 **Dawson-Bryant Elementary School**
**Dawson-Bryant Local Schools**
**(Lawrence County)**
**Ohio University**

4 **Lomond Elementary School**
**Shaker Heights City Schools**
**Cleveland State University**

5 **Miami East North Elementary School**
**Miami East Local Schools**
**(Miami County)**
**Miami University**

### MIDDLE SCHOOLS

6 **East Muskingum Middle School**
**East Muskingum Local Schools**
**(Muskingum County)**
**Muskingum College**
**Ohio University**

7 **Galion Middle School**
**Galion City Schools**
**The Ohio State University**

8 **Talawanda Middle School**
**Talawanda City Schools**
**Miami University**

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS

9 **Federal Hocking High School**
**Federal Hocking Local Schools**
**(Athens County)**
**Ohio University**

10 **Franklin Heights High School**
**South-Western City Schools**
**The Ohio State University**

11 **Reynoldsburg High School**
**Reynoldsburg City Schools**
**The Ohio State University**

12 **Robert A. Taft High School**
**Cincinnati City Schools**
**Miami University**

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